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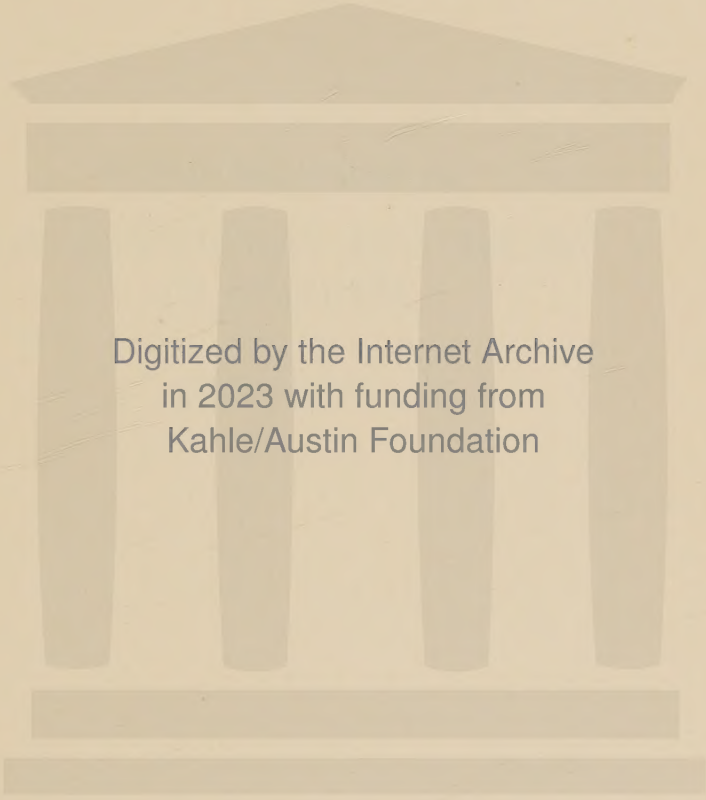
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THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

DOCUMENTS

By

GEORGE I. GAY

Commission for Relief in Belgium

with the collaboration of

H. H. FISHER

Stanford University

VOLUME
I

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PREFACE

An official of the British Foreign Office once described the Commission for Relief in Belgium as a piratical state organized for benevolence. This description, however extravagant in certain particulars, has the virtue of suggesting the attributes of an organization without precedent in international relations. It is a fact that the Commission performed functions and enjoyed prerogatives which usually appertain to state rather than to private institutions. It had, for example, its own flag; it made contracts and informal treaties with belligerent governments; its ships were granted privileges accorded to no other flag; its representatives in regions of military occupation enjoyed powers and immunities of great significance. The Commission itself was neutral as between the opposing lines, but in the pursuit of its duties it waged frequent controversy with both belligerents, and it received aid and essential co-operation from both. Its contacts, however, were by no means restricted to the European scene of war; they extended westward to North and South America, southward to the tip of Africa, and eastward to India and Australasia.

By virtue of these privileges, duties, and connections, the C.R.B. was in one sense an international public body under the patronage of diplomatic officers of the neutral states of the United States, Spain, and the Netherlands. Actually it was a private organization, without incorporation or well-defined legal status, to which the governments engaged in war on the western front entrusted responsibilities which no government or public body could discharge. The chairman of the Commission, Herbert Hoover, and those associated with him in its direction, were private citizens of the United States; they looked first to their countrymen for moral and material support; they received the valued counsel and co-operation of American diplomatic representatives in belligerent states; and the American people generally looked upon the C.R.B. as an American enterprise. The American Government, however, was in no sense responsible for the acts of the Commission, nor were the Spanish and Dutch Governments, nor the Governments of Belgium and France, of Great Britain and the British Dominions, whose citizens participated in varying degrees in the Commission's work.

Inversely the Commission was not exclusively accountable to any single government or state, but in a different measure to many of them. To the Western Allies it was accountable for the fulfillment of German guarantees respecting relief and for the protection and equitable use of imported and native supplies; to the Germans, for the exclusive employment for the benefit of Belgian and French civilians of its many special privileges. To the people of Belgium and Northern France, whom the fortunes of war had deprived of the protection of their Governments, the Commission was a volunteer champion striving with all its power and with the indispensable collaboration of the Belgian Comité National and the Comité Français to succor and defend them. To the Belgian, French, British, and later the United States Governments which furnished subventions for relief, and to the millions of individuals of all corners of the world who contributed money, goods, or services, the Commission was answerable for the honest and efficient use of the resources placed at its disposal—resources which in money and goods alone amounted to nearly a billion dollars, a sum about equivalent to the net debt of the United States in the years prior to the war.

This brief statement of responsibilities by no means covers the entire field of the Commission's obligations, but it indicates the complexity and variety of its public relations. Because of this complexity and because the primary purpose of this book is to present materials for the history of the C.R.B. and of Belgian and French relief, it has seemed advisable to arrange the documents in groups representing important phases of the undertaking rather than in straight chronological order. This arrangement makes cross references numerous and repetition inevitable, since certain events affected several phases of the Commission's activities and many documents deal with more than one subject; but it has the advantage of permitting the documents to stand by themselves with a minimum of editorial comment. Moreover such comment as is made is not interpretative but supplementary and explanatory.

It would be very difficult to determine which of the Commission's many-sided activities was the most important. This has not been attempted, and the order in which the chapters are placed has no special significance. In general, however, the chapters of Volume I deal with activities which

were begun in the early days of relief and carried on until the end of the war, while those of Volume II concern activities of later origin and briefer duration. Exceptions to this general statement are in the first volume, chapter i, "The Origin of the C.R.B.," which covers a period of only a few weeks, and in the second volume, chapter xv, "The Mobilization of Public Support," and chapter xvi, "The Care of the Destitute," which concern phases of the Commission's work important throughout its entire history. These two subjects, however, fall only partially within the scope of this work since they relate in a considerable measure to administrative matters. For this reason they are less fully presented than other aspects of relief of no greater importance. Chapter xiv, "Intergovernment Settlement of Relief Subsidies," deals with events subsequent to the Commission's liquidation, and the documents quoted are not from the C.R.B. archives but are extracts of international treaties and agreements regarding intergovernment debts. These agreements regulate, among larger items, the settlements of subsidies administered by the C.R.B., and the C.R.B., in the person of its chairman, participated in the settlements which involved United States loans. The final chapter, "German Guarantees and Declarations," is, so to speak, a recapitulation of the more important German pronouncements relating to relief.

It has not been possible, in the selection of these documents, to confine them strictly to the subject of public relations. Many of the papers relate in greater or less degree to problems of administration; but these incidental references do not, in any sense, cover the administrative and operative side of the Commission's activities. Because these matters are so important and because of the many references to them, a brief summary of the administrative structure of the C.R.B. has been added as an appendix to Volume II. Another appendix consists of a chronological list of the documents.

The editors desire to acknowledge their great indebtedness to the Directors and staff of the Hoover War Library in whose custody the archives of the Commission have been placed; to Miss Agnes W. Schultze, who has reorganized these archives and has given invaluable aid in searching for and verification of documents; to Mr. Perrin C. Galpin, Secretary of the C.R.B. Educational Foundation, who has been kind enough to read the entire proof and has made many valuable suggestions; to Messrs. Tracy B. Kittredge,

Joseph C. Green, William A. Percy, and many other C.R.B. members who do not appear as authors of any of the documents here presented but whose studies of the Commission's work have been of great service; to Miss Nettie O. Wolfley, for her painstaking assistance in the preparation of the manuscript for the printer, and to the Stanford University Press for its generous co-operation.

G. I. G.
H. H. F.

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CONTENTS

VOLUME I

PAGE

CHAPTER I. THE ORIGIN OF THE C.R.B. 1

1. *Preliminaries of Organization. September 1914*.... 2

Belgian Volunteer Committees—The Comité Central—Shaler's Mission to London—Page and Hoover and the British Negotiations—The American Relief Committee Enlisted for Belgium—American-Belgian Conference in London—The C.R.B. and the Comité National.

2. *The Diplomatic Background. September–October 1914* 6

The First Guarantee of the German Authorities in Belgium—Correspondence with the British, German, Belgian and American Foreign Offices—Formal Approval of Relief under Neutral Auspices.

3. *Progress in Relief Organization. October–November 1914* 13

Hoover's Analysis and Proposals—The Diplomatic Patrons and Officers of the C.R.B.—The Accomplishments of the First Months of Activity—Recognition of the C.R.B. by the British and German Governments—Unification of the Collaborating Belgian Relief Committees in the Comité National.

CHAPTER II. THE ORGANIZATION OF RELIEF ADMINISTRATION 27

1. *First Measures. November 1914*..... 28

The Establishment of C.R.B. in Holland—Arrangements with the Dutch Government for Transshipment of Supplies—Confused and Desperate Situation in Belgium—Hoover's Plan for Correlating the Activities of the London, Rotterdam and Brussels Offices—Progress of C.R.B. in America—Relief Contributions from Canada and the United States.

2. *The C.R.B. in Belgium. November 1914–January 1915* 38

The C.R.B. Brussels Office—Plan of Administration—The Need of American Delegates—The Duties of the C.R.B. Provincial Delegates.

PAGE

3. *The C.R.B. and the German General Government. February–March 1915* 46

The Commission's Responsibilities and German Restrictions — Passport Difficulties — British Protests—Hoover's Appeals to the Governor-General and to Berlin.

4. *The German Authorities and Relief Control. June–July 1915* 55

Von Bissing's Restrictions of the Activities of the C.N. —German Participation in Work of Sub-Committees—The Question of Aid to the Unemployed—Hoover's Explanation of the C.R.B.'s Position—Sir Edward Grey's Statement of Conditions for the Continuance of Relief—German Acceptance of Conditions—Restatement of Guarantees and Assurances.

5. *Adjustment of Functions of C.R.B and C.N. July 1915* 65

Résumé of the Position of the Commission in July 1915—Definition of Administrative Relations of the C.R.B. and the C.N.

6. *The Vermittlungsstelle. November–December 1915* 72

German Agencies with Authority in Relief Affairs—Competition between the Civil and Political Departments of the General Government—Espionage Charges —Gibson's Protest at the Treatment of the Commission—Hoover's Discussion with Members of the General Staff—Von Bissing Sets Up the Vermittlungsstelle.

7. *Inspection and Control. January–February 1916*... 78

Reported Leakages of Relief Supplies to Germany—British Restrictions and Threats to Stop Relief—Reorganization of Department of Inspection and Control —Definition of the Functions of This Department.

8. *Responsibilities and Duties of the Commission Redefined. February–December 1916*..... 90

Hoover Suggests Turning Over the C.R.B.'s Functions to the C.N.—Francqui's Statement of the C.N.'s Dependence on the C.R.B.—British Refusal to Permit the Transfer of Responsibility for Relief—Letters of Sir Edward Grey and Lord Eustace Percy Stating the Position of the British Government—Final Memorandum Agreement Relating to the Objectives and Responsibilities of the C.R.B. and the C.N.

CHAPTER III. PROGRAM OF IMPORTATIONS..... 117

1. *The First Year. November 1914–October 1915*..... 119

An Estimate of Belgium's Food Requirements—Difficulties in Meeting Requirements—Lack of Funds—Scarcity of Ships—Utilization of Gifts, Personal Credit and Emergency Loans—Rapid Increase in Belgian Needs—The Relief of Northern France—Program to the 1915 Harvest—The First Year's Accomplishment.

PAGE

2. *The Second Year. November 1915–October 1916*.... 127

Program for the Winter 1915–16—Alleged Violation of Agreements by the Germans—British Blockade Policy —Foreign Office Restriction on the Commission's Imports—The Beginning of the "Permitted Program"— Hoover's Review of the Needs of Belgium and Northern France—Exports from Belgium—British Stipulations Regarding Use of Native Produce—The Commission's Program Reduced—British Prohibition of Clothing Imports—Hoover's Advocacy of an Increased Program— German Agreement to Forbid Exports of Native Produce—British Authorization of Increased Program— Clothing Imports Permitted—The Second Year's Accomplishment.

3. *The Third Year. November 1916–October 1917*..... 164

Hoover's Recommendation—British Authorization of New Program—The Commission's Position at End of 1916—Beginning of the Unrestricted Submarine Campaign—Disastrous Effect on Commission's Program— German Food Requisitions in Belgium—Resumption of Minimum Program—Summary of Imports.

4. *The Fourth Year. November 1917–October 1918*.... 179

Increased Food Requirements of the Occupied Territories—Effect of Shipping and Food Shortage on Relief —The Ration Program for 1917–18—Relations with the Supreme War Council and Other Inter-Allied Bodies— Priority for Belgian and French Relief—Arrangements with the Allied Maritime Transport Council and the United States Shipping Board—Summary of the Fourth Year's Imports—Clothing and Other Supplies.

5. *Importations during German Evacuation. October–November 1918*..... 188

The Commission's Plan of Relief during Evacuation— Continuation of Commission's Activities in Evacuated Regions Requested by French and Belgian Governments—Maintenance of Lines of Relief Communications—Bases at Dunkirk, Lille, and Antwerp.

6. *Rehabilitation. November 1918–August 1919*..... 196

Return of the C.R.B. American Delegates to Belgium and Northern France—Aid to Returning Population in Northern France—Hoover's Program for Continued Aid to Belgium—Wilson's Approval of Hoover's Belgian and General European Relief Proposals—Increased Imports—Withdrawal of C.R.B. as Belgian and French Governments Take over its Responsibilities.

7. *Summary of Commission's Importations. 1914–1919* 213

Annual Imports and Costs—Summary of Commodities Imported.

PAGE

CHAPTER IV. GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES 214

1. *Early Negotiations for Government Support. November 1914–January 1915* 217

The Inadequacy of Contributions and Other Relief Funds—Estimated Monthly Requirement of £1,000,000—Hoover's Request for Government Subsidy to Pay for Transportation of Gifts in Kind—Grey's Statement of British Position—German Requisitions of Belgian Produce—The Project of Paying Pensioners of the Belgian Government through the C.R.B.—British Refusal to Authorize the C.R.B.'s Exchange Operations Because of Germany's Money Levies in Belgium—Grey's Revised Statement of British Conditions—Lloyd George's Objections Overcome and Exchange Operations Authorized—Subsidies Withheld Subject to Discontinuation of German Levies on Belgian Communities.

2. *Hoover's Negotiations in Berlin. February 1915* 236

Hoover's Decision to Appeal to Highest German Authorities—Measures for Mobilizing Public Opinion in Support of the C.R.B.'s Proposals—Conversations in Berlin with Zimmermann and Helfferich—German Refusal to Discontinue Indemnities—Alternative Plan of Financing Relief by an American Loan—Hoover's Interviews with Warburg, Ballin, Jagow and Bethmann-Hollweg—Confirmation of Previous Guarantees.

3. *Allied Decision to Subsidize Relief. February 1915* .. 258

British Restate Position on Relief Subvention and German Indemnities in Belgium—Hoover's Conference with Lloyd George—Lloyd George Overcomes Cabinet Opposition to Subventions—British and French Budgetary Allowance to the Belgian Government Including £1,000,000 Monthly for "Mr. Hoover's Fund."

4. *Income and Expenditure. March 1915–March 1917* .. 266

C.R.B. Income from All Sources, Spring 1915—Additional Funds from France for French Relief—Successful Negotiations for the Protection of the 1915 Belgian Harvest Assure Continued Subsidies—Rising Costs Bring New Financial Troubles—French Subvention Increased in September 1915—Alleged German Attempts to Control Relief Delay Increase of Belgian Subsidies—September 1916 Increases in Subventions for Belgium and Northern France—Income Inadequate to Meet Rising Costs and Growing Needs.

5. *The Relief Loan Plan. October 1916–February 1917* . 276

Original Proposal for Relief Loan for Northern France—Project Expanded as Relief Commission Loan for both Belgium and France—American Bankers Ready to Act—Project Delayed by Franco-British Financial Negotiations—The Submarine Campaign—Loan Plan Abandoned.

PAGE

6. *The United States Government and Relief Finance. April 1917–March 1919* 281

America in the War—Credits for the Allies—The United States Treasury Becomes the Source for Relief Subventions—American Funds Not Available for Expenditures in Europe—Character of C.R.B. European Disbursements—A Bank Overdraft of £700,000—C.R.B. Relations with the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement—Liquidation of C.R.B. European Expenditures through British Government Departments—Increased American Subsidies in November 1917—Funds for Rehabilitation.

CHAPTER V. SHIPS 304

1. *The C.R.B. Flag. November–December 1914*..... 305

British Permits—German Guarantees of Immunity to Relief Ships—Berlin Consents to Use of Non-neutral Vessels—North Sea Risks and British Government Insurance—German Safe-Conduct Passes.

2. *The German "War Zone" of 1915. February–April 1915* 314

British Ports and English Channel Closed to the C.R.B. —Effect of the Declaration on the Commission's Purchases in London — Difficulties over Cargoes Bought Afloat, over Bunkering, and British Inspection—The Commission's Protests—Berlin Permits Relief Ships to Traverse the War Zone — Identification Marks and Flags.

3. *A Relief Fleet. March 1915–May 1917*..... 322

Scarcity of Ships and Prohibitive Charter Rates—Hoover's Plan to Use Interned German Vessels—British and German Qualified Consent — Plan Blocked by French Opposition—Shortage of Ships More Acute—French Ask Hoover to Revive the Plan—German Refusal to Reopen the Question—Other Schemes to Secure Relief Ships—A Shipowning Company—United States Naval Colliers—Belgian-owned Vessels—Acquisition of Twenty Vessels under the Belgian Flag—Inadequacy of This Fleet and Scarcity of Neutral Charters—C.R.B. Project to Buy Vessels.

4. *Unrestricted Submarine Warfare. February–April 1917* 343

C.R.B. Shipping Losses in 1916—Allied Requisitions of Ships — The German Submarine Declaration — Withdrawal of Neutral Vessels from C.R.B. Service—Routes to Rotterdam Closed—C.R.B. Cargoes Unloaded in England—Northern Route for Relief Ships Established (March 1917) — Inspection and Bunkering — C.R.B. Forced to Sell Supplies Blockaded in England—Losses of C.R.B. Ships.

PAGE

CHAPTER IV. GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES 214

1. *Early Negotiations for Government Support. November 1914–January 1915* 217

The Inadequacy of Contributions and Other Relief Funds—Estimated Monthly Requirement of £1,000,000—Hoover's Request for Government Subsidy to Pay for Transportation of Gifts in Kind—Grey's Statement of British Position—German Requisitions of Belgian Produce—The Project of Paying Pensioners of the Belgian Government through the C.R.B.—British Refusal to Authorize the C.R.B.'s Exchange Operations Because of Germany's Money Levies in Belgium—Grey's Revised Statement of British Conditions—Lloyd George's Objections Overcome and Exchange Operations Authorized—Subsidies Withheld Subject to Discontinuation of German Levies on Belgian Communities.

2. *Hoover's Negotiations in Berlin. February 1915* 236

Hoover's Decision to Appeal to Highest German Authorities—Measures for Mobilizing Public Opinion in Support of the C.R.B.'s Proposals—Conversations in Berlin with Zimmermann and Helfferich—German Refusal to Discontinue Indemnities—Alternative Plan of Financing Relief by an American Loan—Hoover's Interviews with Warburg, Ballin, Jagow and Bethmann-Hollweg—Confirmation of Previous Guarantees.

3. *Allied Decision to Subsidize Relief. February 1915* .. 258

British Restate Position on Relief Subvention and German Indemnities in Belgium—Hoover's Conference with Lloyd George—Lloyd George Overcomes Cabinet Opposition to Subventions—British and French Budgetary Allowance to the Belgian Government Including £1,000,000 Monthly for "Mr. Hoover's Fund."

4. *Income and Expenditure. March 1915–March 1917* .. 266

C.R.B. Income from All Sources, Spring 1915—Additional Funds from France for French Relief—Successful Negotiations for the Protection of the 1915 Belgian Harvest Assure Continued Subsidies—Rising Costs Bring New Financial Troubles—French Subvention Increased in September 1915—Alleged German Attempts to Control Relief Delay Increase of Belgian Subsidies—September 1916 Increases in Subventions for Belgium and Northern France—Income Inadequate to Meet Rising Costs and Growing Needs.

5. *The Relief Loan Plan. October 1916–February 1917* . 276

Original Proposal for Relief Loan for Northern France—Project Expanded as Relief Commission Loan for both Belgium and France—American Bankers Ready to Act—Project Delayed by Franco-British Financial Negotiations—The Submarine Campaign—Loan Plan Abandoned.

PAGE

6. *The United States Government and Relief Finance. April 1917–March 1919* 281

America in the War—Credits for the Allies—The United States Treasury Becomes the Source for Relief Subventions—American Funds Not Available for Expenditures in Europe—Character of C.R.B. European Disbursements—A Bank Overdraft of £700,000—C.R.B. Relations with the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement—Liquidation of C.R.B. European Expenditures through British Government Departments—Increased American Subsidies in November 1917—Funds for Rehabilitation.

CHAPTER V. SHIPS 304

1. *The C.R.B. Flag. November–December 1914*..... 305

British Permits—German Guarantees of Immunity to Relief Ships—Berlin Consents to Use of Non-neutral Vessels—North Sea Risks and British Government Insurance—German Safe-Conduct Passes.

2. *The German "War Zone" of 1915. February–April 1915* 314

British Ports and English Channel Closed to the C.R.B. —Effect of the Declaration on the Commission's Purchases in London — Difficulties over Cargoes Bought Afloat, over Bunkering, and British Inspection—The Commission's Protests—Berlin Permits Relief Ships to Traverse the War Zone — Identification Marks and Flags.

3. *A Relief Fleet. March 1915–May 1917*..... 322

Scarcity of Ships and Prohibitive Charter Rates—Hoover's Plan to Use Interned German Vessels—British and German Qualified Consent — Plan Blocked by French Opposition—Shortage of Ships More Acute—French Ask Hoover to Revive the Plan—German Refusal to Reopen the Question—Other Schemes to Secure Relief Ships—A Shipowning Company—United States Naval Colliers—Belgian-owned Vessels—Acquisition of Twenty Vessels under the Belgian Flag—Inadequacy of This Fleet and Scarcity of Neutral Charters—C.R.B. Project to Buy Vessels.

4. *Unrestricted Submarine Warfare. February–April 1917* 343

C.R.B. Shipping Losses in 1916—Allied Requisitions of Ships — The German Submarine Declaration — Withdrawal of Neutral Vessels from C.R.B. Service—Routes to Rotterdam Closed—C.R.B. Cargoes Unloaded in England—Northern Route for Relief Ships Established (March 1917) — Inspection and Bunkering — C.R.B. Forced to Sell Supplies Blockaded in England—Losses of C.R.B. Ships.

PAGE

5. *The Shipping Crisis. May–November 1917* 366

Allied Losses, February–September—Disastrous Effect on C.R.B. Program—Belgium and Northern France on Starvation Rations—Hoover's Efforts to Secure Neutral Ships—Norwegian Cargoes—A Message to King Albert —Struggles of the C.R.B. London Office—The Inter-Allied Chartering Executive — The Allied Maritime Transport Council—The Allies Adopt the Principle of Priority for the C.R.B. Program.

6. *Shipping Problems of 1918* 381

The Convoy System — Submarine Losses Checked — Effect of A.E.F. Tonnage Requirements—The Allied Maritime Transport Council and the United States Shipping Board—The "Fifty-Fifty" Agreement—Summary of C.R.B. Shipping Losses and Accomplishment.

CHAPTER VI. NORTHERN FRANCE 391

1. *Conditions and Early Negotiations. November 1914–March 1915* 393

Need of French Relief Recognized—Military and Diplomatic Complications—Aid for French Refugees—Maubeuge and Givet-Fumay Provisioned with Belgium—C.R.B. Relief Proposals Not Encouraged at Paris—A Commercial Proposition—Hoover's Appeal to Poincaré — Ribot's Guarded Statement — Alternative Plans.

2. *Fundamental Guarantees. March–April 1915* 403

Finances—Indirect French Support Assured—First Advances through the Belgian Treasury — Approval of French Relief by Berlin—Agreements between German Military Authorities and the Commission—The Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France.

3. *Administration. April 1915–February 1916* 417

Difficulties of Organization—The Status of French Citizens—The Question of Forced Labor—The C.R.B. Program of Finance, Distribution and Accounting—The Question of Local Produce—Subsidies Increased—Franco-British Approval of the Commission's Program and Methods—Hoover's Efforts at Paris and Chantilly to Secure More Direct French Support — The Lille Deportations.

4. *Supplementary Program for the Cities. March 1916–April 1917* 439

Needs of the Industrial Regions—The Commission's Supplementary Program—New Committees Subsidized by France—The Comité Hollandais—Hoover's Conferences in Paris with French and British Authorities—Distribution of Supplementary Supplies by the C.R.B. —Program for 1916–17—Increasing Needs—Additional Purchases in Holland.

PAGE

5. *From Relief to Reconstruction. 1917–1919* 456

Effects of American Declaration of War and the U-Boat Campaign—Dutch Delegates—Reorganization of the Comité Français—German Evacuation of Northern France—The Comité Général des Régions Libérées—The C.R.B. Organization in Devastated Areas.

6. *The Destitute* 469

Entire Population Rationed—The Commission's Financial Reserve—Its Distribution for Care of Destitute—Gift Clothing and Special Charity—The Final Accounting—Child Health—The Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées.

CHAPTER VII. THE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES 477

1. *The American Delegate in Belgium* 478

The Délégué Américain—First Delegates—Duties in the Early Period—Unofficial Service—Duties in the Later Period—Inspection and Control—Reports to Brussels Office—Inventories and Special Investigations—Contacts with Brussels Headquarters—Brussels Conferences—Provincial Committee Meetings—Support of Belgian Morale.

2. *The American Delegate in Northern France* 492

Two Million People in the Army Zone—A German Accompanying Officer—French Committees—In the Name of France—The German Army—The American and His German Officer—Duties of the Representative—Abroad in the District—Charleville and Brussels—The Rôle of the German Officer—Six Districts—A Day on the Road—Questions of Power—The Front Line of Relief.

CHAPTER VIII. HARVESTS 508

PART I. THE OCCUPATION ZONE

1. *The Belgian Harvest of 1914. November 1914–March 1915* 510

German Requisitions and Allied Support of Relief—Von der Goltz Declaration — Hoover Seeks Berlin's Confirmation—Zimmermann's Inclusive Assurance to Gerard—Von Bissing Statement That Requisitions of Foodstuffs Will Be Prohibited—Zimmermann Reservations—Value of Guarantees Jeopardized—Hoover's Visit to Berlin—The Position of Berlin Clarified—Von Bissing's Confirmation of Previous Guarantees—British Qualified Acceptance of German Assurances.

PAGE

2. *The Belgian Harvest of 1915. March–July 1915*..... 522
The Protection of Crops and the Continuation of Relief—Hoover's Appeal to Berlin—The British Ultimatum—Francqui's Statement on the British Position —Threat of Discontinuance of Relief on August 15—Brussels Negotiations—Von Bissing's Agreement to Preserve the 1915 Crop for the Belgians on Condition of Continued Allied Support — British and German Conditions Met—General Guarantee of 29th July 1915 —German Decrees Relating to the 1915 Harvest.

3. *The Extension of Protection of Native Produce. July 1915–March 1918*..... 550
The Question of Fodder—British Objection to German Fodder Requisitions—Restrictions on the Commission's Imports—Other Matters at Issue—The Effect of the Broad German Guarantee of the 14th April 1916 —Relaxation of British Restrictions — German Crop Decrees of 1916, 1917, and 1918.

PART II. THE ARMY ZONES

4. *The Belgian Etapes. September–October 1915*..... 561
The Situation in East and West Flanders—The C.R.B. and the German General Staff—Entire Harvest Requisitioned by the Army—The Army Agrees to Supply a Daily Ration of 120 Grams of Wheat per Person.

5. *Northern France. August–November 1915*..... 569
Early Discussions at Charleville—Von Kessler's Assurances of the German Intention to Issue Part of the Crop to the Civilians—Kellogg's Negotiations—Declaration of the Intendant General Regarding the Daily Ration of 100 Grams—The Potato Ration—Methods of Payment for Rations.

6. *The Harvest of 1916. February–September 1916*.... 577
The Paris Cabinet's Attitude Respecting the Produce in the French Regions—The Allies Demand the Reservation of All the Products of the Soil—Negotiations in Berlin—Von Kessler–Kellogg Agreement Regarding the 1916 Harvest—Daily Ration of 200 Grams of Native Flour—Allied Acceptance of the Commission's Agreement with the General Staff.

7. *The Harvests of 1917 and 1918*..... 598
Discussion of 1917 crop by C.R.B., C.H.N., and C.F. and the General Staff—Effect of Military Operations on Production—Authorized Daily Ration of 150 Grams— The 1918 Agreement—Further Reductions to 75 Grams —Situation Changed by German Evacuation of the Old Army Zones.

8. *Local and Imported Bread Grains. 1914–1918*..... 605
Table Showing Bread Grains Locally Produced and Imported for Each Year 1914–1918.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

OPPOSITE PAGE

Letter, 25 February 1916, Ambassador Page to Hoover.. 18

Note, 22 October 1914, Francqui to Hoover..... 43

Certificate, 2 November 1914, Whitlock and Villalobar, Confirming Belgium's Requirements..... 124

Hoover's Memoranda, 11–12 February 1915, of Conferences with German Officials in Brussels.... 242

Hoover's Memoranda, 11–12 February 1915, etc. (*continued*) 274

Letter, 8 March 1915, Sir Edward Grey to Hoover..... 306

German Safe Conduct Pass, 2 February 1917, for C.R.B. Steamer "Feistein" 354

Map of North Sea and Atlantic Showing Danger Zones.. 378

Map of Relief Area of Belgium and Northern France... 394

Hoover's Memoranda on Inspection Trip through Northern France in March 1916..... 438

Letter, 11 November 1914, van Dyke to Hoover..... 490

Letter, 1 June 1915, Hoover to the Director of the Commission's Rotterdam Office 554

PUBLIC RELATIONS OF

THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

DOCUMENTS

VOLUME
I

Chapter I

THE ORIGIN OF THE C. R. B.

At seven o'clock on the evening of the 2d August 1914 Herr von Below handed to M. Davignon, the Belgian Foreign Minister, the German ultimatum. This momentous document, drafted by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff a week before and carried to Brussels on the 29th July by a special messenger, declared that if Belgium observed a benevolent neutrality, making no opposition to the passing of German troops across her territory, her sovereign rights and independence would be guaranteed and she would be compensated for all damages suffered. If she resisted, she would be treated as an enemy. She had twelve hours to reply. There were no differences of opinion in the Belgian Cabinet which met at nine to consider the ultimatum. The Cabinet's answer delivered at seven the next morning declared that an acceptance of the German proposals would "sacrifice the honor of the nation and at the same time betray its duty toward Europe." Belgium was determined "to repel by all the means in its power every attack upon its rights." The expected German reply came early the following day (4th August). At six A.M. von Below announced that Germany would act "by force of arms" and two hours later German cavalry crossed the frontier. By the evening of the 4th the heads of six German columns of all arms, the advance guard of a host of over half a million men, were two or three miles beyond the frontier. The occupation of Belgium had begun.

The heroic resistance of the garrison of Liège, the gallant conduct and skillful handling of the Belgian field army gained four priceless days for the French and British forces and compelled the Germans to use before Antwerp troops designated for the seizure of the channel ports and sorely needed later at the Marne. But Belgium was engulfed in the onrushing "gray-green tide." By the end of August all of Belgium except the region about Antwerp and a narrow strip of territory in East and West Flanders had been overrun by the invader. In the middle of October the Belgian troops retired from Antwerp and took up a position along the Nieuport-Dixmude-Ypres line which the Germans never

penetrated. The Belgian Government, which previously had withdrawn from Brussels to Antwerp, established its headquarters at Havre where it remained until the liberation of Belgium four years later.

As the German armies swept across Belgium, devastation and panic filled the roads with refugees and threw the nation's highly organized economic life into tangled disorder. Communications between communes were broken, business activities were suspended, and ripe grain stood unharvested in the fields. Isolated communities began to feel the lack of the most elementary necessities, and larger towns were taxed to provide food and shelter for the homeless. To meet this situation the communal authorities, under special powers granted by royal decree, requisitioned food stocks, and volunteer committees were formed to house and feed refugees and give aid to the destitute. These efforts ameliorated much suffering, but they were necessarily temporary expedients maintained with increasing difficulty as local resources disappeared.

1. *Preliminaries of Organization. September 1914*

Among these volunteer committees the Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation of Brussels was notable for the standing and influence of its members, and for the energy and resourcefulness with which it acted in the emergency. A meeting on the 1st September 1914, under the chairmanship of M. Emile Francqui, was a preliminary step in the organization of the Comité Central under the presidency of M. Solvay and under the patronage of the Ministers of the United States and of Spain, Mr. Brand Whitlock and the Marquis de Villalobar.[1] This committee promoted and coordinated the measures of relief in Brussels and its suburbs,

[1] Others who took part in these early meetings were: MM. J. Allard, le Comte Cicogna, M. Despret, E. Janssen, F. Van Bree, L. Cousin, L. Solvay, and three Americans—Mr. Hugh Gibson, Secretary of the American Legation, and Messrs. D. Heineman and W. Hulse. The minutes of these meetings are to be found in *Rapports mensuels du Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.* M. Albert Henry has given a full account of these events in his books, *L'Oeuvre du Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation pendant la Guerre* and *Le Ravitaillement de la Belgique pendant l'Occupation allemande.* See also Brand Whitlock, *Belgium, A Personal Narrative,* I, pp. 297–301, 340–51, 358–69; Hugh Gibson, *A Journal from Our Legation in Belgium,* pp. 181–83, 243–44, 279–84, 300–301; and Vernon Kellogg, *Fighting Starvation in Belgium,* pp. 1–35.

but for the time being did not extend its activities into other parts of the country. By the latter part of September the Comité Central of Brussels and the volunteer committees in Liège, Charleroi, and Namur realized that famine was but a few weeks off. The normal food deficit of the country was greatly increased by requisition and destruction, and the volunteer committees had, therefore, to find ways of providing food not only for the destitute, but for the entire population of the towns. Since there was no hope of getting the needed supplies from German sources, the committees sent emissaries abroad to make known the desperate state of affairs in Belgium, to buy provisions, and to arrange for their shipment into the occupied territories. The representative of the Comité Central, Mr. Millard K. Shaler, an American engineer residing in Brussels, reached London on the 26th September after various adventures, including arrest by Germans at Liège and imprisonment for two days as a spy, despite his possession of a *Passierschein* furnished by the German authorities in Brussels. Shaler found that he could buy supplies, but when he attempted through the Belgian Legation to get an official permit to ship 2,500 tons of wheat, rice, beans, etc., to Brussels, he encountered difficulties. The British authorities feared that despite the written guarantee of the German command against requisition, these commodities might directly or indirectly benefit the army of occupation. Shaler described the situation to an American friend, Mr. Edgar Rickard, by whom he was taken to Mr. Herbert Hoover, who, with Rickard and Messrs. John Beaver White, Clarence Graff, Colonel Millard Hunsiker, and other Americans, was directing the American Relief Committee in London under the patronage of Ambassador Walter Hines Page. This Committee had about completed the repatriation of 100,000 Americans stranded in Europe at the outbreak of the war, and the members were themselves expecting to return home as soon as their services were no longer required in the repatriation of their fellow-citizens. Hoover was immediately impressed by the seriousness of the Belgian situation. He suggested that perhaps official objections could be met if these foodstuffs were consigned to the American Minister in Brussels and distributed under his guardianship. Hoover then took Shaler to Ambassador Page who promptly agreed to use his good offices with the British Government in negotiation along this line.

On the 1st October Mr. Hugh Gibson, Secretary of the American Legation in Brussels, reached London joining Shaler in pressing his case through Belgian and American diplomatic channels;[2] five days later the British Government consented to the exportation on condition that the supplies be shipped by the American Ambassador in London to the American Minister in Brussels. On the same day Ambassador Page in consultation with Hoover drafted a message to the Department of State asking for authority to undertake the protection of the relief supplies required by the British Government as a condition of its export permit. During the two anxious weeks that passed before the Ambassador received this authorization from Washington,[3] the complexities and magnitude of the relief problem became disturbingly apparent. Hoover had expected that the completion of the negotiation for export permits would be the end of his connection with the enterprise; it was, on the contrary, the beginning. The arrangement with the British imposed on the overworked Ambassador new responsibilities which grew from day to day, and he promptly called on Hoover to arrange for the first shipments and to act for him in other matters pertaining to relief. Representatives of the Belgian cities of Charleroi and Liège had, in the meantime, come to London seeking aid, and on application to the British Government were referred to Ambassador Page and by him in turn to Hoover.

The course of events already described, the mounting evidence of the desperate straits of the Belgian people, and the clear indication of the need of neutral intervention persuaded members of the American Relief Committee to give their services in the interests of Belgian relief. Hoover suggested that efforts being made in America for refugees be directed to relief in Belgium, and at a conference on the 12th October it was agreed that an American Committee should be formed under diplomatic patronage to centralize American efforts and to carry out the conditions imposed by the belligerents on the relief work. Immediately this decision was taken, Hoover sent out an appeal to America

[2] Documents 2 and 3.

[3] Documents 4 and 11. These telegrams and other correspondence relating to Belgian relief in 1914 are included in the 1914 Supplement, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, pp. 809–24.

through the press on the 13th,[4] and sent a message to Minister Whitlock requesting him to reinforce his appeal by a direct statement of the situation to President Wilson.

Minister Whitlock's appeal to President Wilson[5] came through the American Embassy on the 16th October. Two days later M. Francqui and Baron Lambert of the Brussels Comité Central, accompanied by Gibson, who had meantime returned to Brussels, reached London, and engaged in a series of conferences with Page and Hoover at the American Embassy. In the course of these conferences Hoover prepared a memorandum for Ambassador Page[6] suggesting a method of procedure and a form of organization, and proposing that relief should be undertaken not for Brussels alone but for the whole of the occupied territory. He recommended the erection of an organization under American leadership with Belgian participation in order to protect the Belgians from interference and to secure the co-ordination of the efforts of the Belgians themselves. This memorandum proved with experience of actual administration to be the real "constitution" of the organization. He also proposed that the local assurance given by the German authorities to Whitlock on the 17th September should be extended to the whole population of Belgium,[7] and that direct guarantees should be obtained from the German and British Governments, since the work of the Commission could not rest upon the assurance of military officers. In line with these recommendations the Commission for Relief in Belgium was organized formally at a meeting on the 22d October.[8] Upon the return of Francqui and Lambert to Brussels, the Comité Central (early in November) constituted itself the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, making the necessary changes in its organization to conform to its new character and responsibilities.

[4] Document 6. The appeal was in the form of a statement by Shaler. This and other statements made to the press were for the double purpose of informing public opinion of the true conditions in Belgium and of pressing the Washington authorities to give prompt assent to American participation in relief measures.

[5] Document 9. [6] Document 13. [7] Documents 1 and 7.

[8] Document 15. The word "American" was dropped from the name of the new committee when the diplomatic representatives of Spain and the Netherlands were invited to become patrons. The active personnel of the committee remained American.

2. *The Diplomatic Background. September–October 1914*

DOCUMENT NO. 1

Letter, Governor-General von der Goltz to Minister Whitlock, *agreeing that his Government will not requisition supplies destined for the civil population*

Brussels, 17 September 1914

To the Minister of the United States of America

Mr. Brand Whitlock, Brussels

In reply to the communication which Your Excellency in behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium addressed to the Head of the Imperial Administration, I have the honor to confirm to you:

1. That the Imperial Government agrees not to levy any impost for the needs of the German Army, nor to requisition the shipments of wheat and flour destined for the alimentation of the Belgian civil population.

2. That, if contraband of war should be found in a shipment, the entire shipment would be confiscated to the profit of the Imperial Government.

3. That the civil administration of the Imperial Government reserves to itself alone the right of decision as to the distribution of the wheat and flour in the different portions of the occupied territory, according to local needs, and to supervise this distribution.

I should be glad to receive new communications from Your Excellency on this subject.

The Imperial Governor-General
[*Translation*] (Signed) von der Goltz, *Field Marshal*

DOCUMENT NO. 2

Memorandum, Hugh Gibson to the Belgian Minister in London, *asking the Minister to intervene to secure export permits for relief supplies to Belgium*

London, 1 October 1914

With a view to preventing a shortage of provisions in Belgium and consequent suffering of the civil population, a committee has been organized in Brussels under the name of Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation, under the patronage of the Spanish and American Ministers. The Committee is composed of prominent Belgians and has raised considerable funds to buy foodstuffs.

The German military authorities have given assurances in writing that any food supplies purchased by the committee will not be requisitioned for the troops, but will be reserved for the feeding of the civil population. The original letters on the subject from General von Lüttwitz are attached hereto, as well as a form to be signed by the General and fastened to each car transporting the provisions, stating their character and their exemption from requisition.

Mr. Millard K. Shaler, an American citizen, has volunteered to come to England to purchase supplies and ship them to Brussels. The supplies have been purchased and all that is now required is a permit from the British Government allowing the exportation of these food supplies and the sacks containing them from England to the Continent.

The food supply in Brussels is getting very low. There is practically no more flour nor salt and there is great scarcity of other supplies. It is to be hoped that the permit for exporting the supplies purchased by the Brussels Committee will be granted immediately in order that Mr. Shaler may get them to Brussels without delay. It is felt in Belgium that anything approaching a famine will lead to grave disorders the consequences of which cannot now be foreseen.

Mr. Shaler is well known to the Legation at Brussels and is vouched for in every respect.

DOCUMENT NO. 3

Telegram, GIBSON TO AMERICAN CONSUL GENERAL AT ANTWERP, *requesting the Belgian Foreign Minister to instruct his representative in London to support the relief enterprise*

LONDON, 1 October 1914

AMERICAN CONSUL GENERAL, ANTWERP

Gibson, Secretary of Legation, sends you following message. Quote. Millard K. Shaler sent here by Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation to buy food supplies for the civil population of Brussels. Supplies are bought and will be shipped as soon as permit can be secured from British Government to export them via Holland. Written assurances have been given by German military authorities that these supplies will not be requisitioned for the military forces, but will be used exclusively for the civil population. Please see the Minister for Foreign Affairs and ask that instructions be sent Belgian Minister here to take matter up immediately with British Foreign Office. Food supplies in Brussels are practically exhausted and immediate action is imperative. End quote. Please telegraph reply.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

DOCUMENT NO. 4

Telegram, AMBASSADOR PAGE TO SECRETARY BRYAN, *asking authorization to ship relief supplies to the American Minister in Belgium in accordance with the conditions imposed by the British Government on the export of relief purchases*

LONDON, 6 October 1914

SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON

783. A Belgian Committee has been formed at Brussels under the patronage of the American and Spanish Ministers there for the purpose of importing foodstuffs for the poor of Brussels who I am

informed are faced with famine. The German authorities in occupation have consented and the Belgian Minister here informs me that under instructions from his Government he has obtained permission of the British authorities for the export of supplies, on condition that they be despatched by this Embassy and consigned to our Legation at Brussels. If you authorize me to take this step I believe it would be well to obtain a definite assurance from the German Government of their approval of this humanitarian project, the execution of which is in charge of an American citizen Millard King Shaler, who is now in London purchasing supplies and is strongly vouched for by Mr. Whitlock.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

DOCUMENT NO. 5

Extract from letter, EDGAR RICKARD TO HERBERT HOOVER, *describing the activities of the American Relief Committee in the summer of 1914 and relating the manner in which this committee became interested in the Belgian problem*

LONDON, 10 May 1916

. . . . To give a few more particulars: the American Relief Committee, under the financial patronage of the American Government, the sponsorship of the American Ambassadors, and the chairmanship of yourself, was instituted at the outbreak of the war to undertake, in the first instance, the relief of American refugees in Europe. This service was practically completed by the end of September 1914. At this time Mr. Millard Shaler came to London representing the Comité Central of Brussels. He made application to the British Government, through the Belgian Minister, for permission to ship some foodstuffs to the city of Brussels. He had little success until upon my introduction of him to you and from you to Ambassador Page the idea was advanced by you of shipment under the guardianship of the American officials. As a result of Mr. Page's intervention the British Foreign Office replied to the request of the Belgian Minister on the 6th October that authorization could only be given if the American Ambassador would undertake to ship the goods to the American Minister in Brussels, to be distributed by Americans under his responsibility. At the same time representatives of other committees in Belgium[9] came to London seeking foodstuffs and the representatives of the Belgian Refugees' Committee appealed to the American Relief Committee and to the American people for help. In consequence of all these points of impact, the American Ambassador called upon you as chairman of the American Relief Committee to organize the whole business on his behalf. As a result it was agreed among the principal representatives of the American Relief Committee that the Committee should take up the Belgian problem, and at our suggestion the American Ambassador on October 6th cabled to Washington asking the Government's approval of intervention on

[9] Namely, those of Charleroi and Liège.

behalf of the Committee in Belgian matters and suggesting that the assent of the German Government should be obtained direct, as we had no confidence in local military guarantees. On October 21st this approval was received from the American Government after they had consulted and had assurances from the German Government in Berlin, through Ambassador Gerard.

Meantime, in the confidence that this assent would be obtained, you formulated an appeal to the American people recommending that they should devote their interest in Belgian refugees and in other Belgian funds to the exclusive support of the Belgian Relief Committee for use in the occupied area. This appeal was sent out with the approval of the American Ambassador on October 13th and you instituted proposals for co-operating with several other Belgian committees. As a reinforcement to your appeal you asked Mr. Whitlock to send a message, and on October 16th an appeal came through Mr. Page's hands from Mr. Brand Whitlock, addressed to the President of the United States, and at the same time advice came from Brussels that a delegation of prominent Belgians representing the Brussels Comité Central were coming to London to further Mr. Shaler's efforts on behalf of that city. Messrs. Francqui and Lambert arrived in London on October 18th and a meeting was brought about at the American Ambassador's of the parties interested; and as a result of the conference extending over two days, it was determined that relief would have to be undertaken of the whole occupied area and not of Brussels alone and that in order to effect this it was desirable to create in Belgium a general organization embodying the whole Belgian community and to maintain it as a separate entity of the neutral commission. There were many important reasons for this decision, and the subsequent ability of the relief organization to withstand shocks has been largely due to this separation. . . . .

DOCUMENT NO. 6

Statement,[10] TO THE AMERICAN PRESS, *urging immediate action for the rescue of the Belgian people*

LONDON, 13 October 1914

Three weeks ago I left Brussels with a credit of $100,000 for the purpose of purchasing foodstuffs for needy Brussels. The situation was then serious. It has since then grown positively desperate. Immediately after my arrival in London I arranged for the purchase and transport of provisions, but I am still awaiting authorization to make shipments.

The British Government will permit exportation to Holland, and the Dutch Government in turn has promised to permit exportation to Brussels, but we are held up by lack of authorization from Washington to make shipments in the name of the American Ambassador

[10] Given out by Hoover in the form of a statement by Millard K. Shaler. From an article in the *New York Times* of the 13th October 1914, entitled, "Our Word Awaited to Help Brussels."

here to the American Minister at Brussels, this being required by the British Government, which desires a guarantee that the food will not be diverted to German military uses.

I hold a written guarantee from the German General commanding at Brussels that no seizure will be made, but that the food will be devoted entirely to the civil population of Brussels.

Nearly a week ago the Embassy here presented the matter to the State Department, which thus far has been unable to furnish a definite answer about permitting shipments to be made through American channels.

It has been reported that Washington awaits an answer from Germany, to whom the matter was referred.

Either the State Department should take action on its own initiative or should insist on Germany giving a speedy, definite answer. It is no exaggeration to say that thousands of lives actually depend on immediate action. I have personally received and have seen reports received by others that the situation in Brussels regarding food is positively dangerous.

It is not only a matter of feeding a certain number of hungry people running into scores of thousands, but it is also a question of keeping the population from consequences which usually accompany starvation, for it is quite possible that the hunger-mad people will commit some overt act which will cause the German authorities to take severe action.

Since the German occupation it has been the constant endeavor of the civil officials and also of Minister Whitlock to keep the populace quiet. Thus far they have been successful, but if the food supply ceases it is probable that wise counsels will be unavailing.

Fully 200,000 persons were receiving rations three weeks ago; the number is far greater now. Normally Brussels uses 300 tons of cereals daily. Importations have now virtually ceased and the stocks are practically used up.

I have authority to ship fifteen hundred tons, but there is no way of getting the food there until the diplomatic red tape is cut.

The American Government should, from reasons of pure humanity, insist that Germany take favorable action, or make shipments through American diplomats, whether Germany agrees or not. I am certain that Germany will agree if pressed, for the local military commanders have already guaranteed the immunity of the food from seizure.

DOCUMENT NO. 7

Letter, VON DER GOLTZ TO COMITÉ CENTRAL, *stating the German approval of their undertaking and guaranteeing the relief supplies from requisition*

BRUSSELS, 16 October 1914

In answer to your courteous letter of today I have the honor to reply with all respect that I welcome with lively satisfaction the undertaking of the Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation and

do not hesitate formally and distinctly to give assurances that foodstuffs of all kinds imported by the Committee under Your Excellency's patronage for the provisioning of the civil populace of Belgium shall be kept exclusively for the use of the Belgian populace; that these foodstuffs shall hereafter be exempt from requisition by the military authorities; and, finally, that they shall remain entirely at the disposal of the Committee.

(Signed) Baron von der Goltz
Field Marshal

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 8

Telegram, Whitlock to Bryan, *explaining the relief organization and requesting official approval*

American Legation, Brussels
16 October 1914

To the Secretary of State, Washington

As I have already reported to the Department, a committee of notable citizens of Brussels was appointed several weeks ago under the patronage of the Spanish Minister and myself to give food to the poor of this city. This work, which had the approval of the Belgian Government and of the German military authorities, has been carried on with excellent results. But now a grave situation confronts the land. In normal times Belgium produces only one-sixth of the foodstuffs she consumes. Within two weeks there will be no more food in Belgium. Winter is coming on and there are thousands who are without home and without hope; therefore it is necessary to extend this relief work to the whole of Belgium. My Spanish colleague and I have been requested by the local Belgian authorities and by the German military authorities to permit the organization, under our patronage, of a committee that will undertake to revictual all of Belgium, and we have secured from the German military authorities formal official assurance that all foodstuffs shipped into Belgium in the care of the committee and intended for the feeding of the impoverished civil population will be respected by the soldiery and not made the object of military requisition. It is now necessary to obtain permission from the English Government that foodstuffs may be shipped into Belgium. In view of this fact Gibson goes to London tomorrow with messages from the Spanish Minister and me to the respective ambassadors of our countries to lay the subject before them. Baron Lambert and M. Francqui, representing the Belgian Relief Committee, will accompany him to acquaint the Belgian Minister in London with the situation and ask him to present the matter to the British Government. Our hope is that the Belgian Minister can arrange, and if there be no impropriety in their so doing, that the American and Spanish Ambassadors may assist him

in arranging for the passage of the provisions which the Committee is ready to buy.

I trust the Department will approve this course and further it by instructions to London. It is not money but food that is needed. If some appropriate means can be found to call the attention of our generous people at home to the plight of the poor in Belgium, I am sure that they will send succor and relief for the winter that is drawing near. It seems to me to be a work of mercy that will touch the hearts of those who are brought to understand it and give our people in America an opportunity to serve nobly in a high cause.

WHITLOCK

DOCUMENT NO. 9

Telegram, WHITLOCK TO PRESIDENT WILSON, *urging American support of Belgian relief*

AMERICAN LEGATION, BRUSSELS
16 October 1914

To American Ambassador, Berlin
Please forward to Washington

THE PRESIDENT, WASHINGTON

In two weeks the civil population of Belgium, already in misery, will face starvation. In view of this fact, and at the request of the Relief Committee, I venture to call your attention to my telegram to the Department dated 16 October in the conviction that your great heart will find some way by which America may help to provide food for these hungry ones in the dark days of the terrible winter that is coming on.

WHITLOCK, *American Minister*

DOCUMENT NO. 10

"Note Verbale," GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO AMBASSADOR GERARD, *stating the German Government's approval of Belgian relief*

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
16 October 1914

To the Ambassador of the United States of America, Berlin

In reply to your verbal note of the ninth of October, F.O. No. 759, the Foreign Office has the honor to inform you that the furnishing of foodstuffs for the poor of Belgium has the approval of the German Government.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 11

Telegram, LANSING TO PAGE FOR WHITLOCK, *giving official approval to their actions in connection with relief of Belgium*

WASHINGTON, 20 October 1914

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

359. Twentieth. For American Minister, Brussels, as Number 40. Twentieth. Your telegram October sixteenth, ten A.M., transmitted via London, regarding relief of Belgium. Department approves your action and has given instructions to the Ambassador at London to render you and your Spanish colleague every assistance.

LANSING
Acting Secretary of State

[*Telegram received 21st October 1914*]

DOCUMENT NO. 12

Letter, BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO PAGE, *confirming that British Government are not stopping food supplies going to Rotterdam for civil population of Belgium*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
20 October 1914

MY DEAR MR. PAGE:

Since our conversation this afternoon Sir Edward Grey has written to Baron Lambert telling him that we are not stopping any food supplies going to Rotterdam—from neutral countries in neutral ships—which we are satisfied are not for the use of the German Government or Army, and that we shall not therefore interfere with the food supplies for the civil population of Belgium unless we have reason to suppose that the assurance given by Marshal von der Goltz to the American and Spanish Ministers is not being carried out.

Baron Lambert thought that Rotterdam would be the most convenient port.

Yours sincerely
(Signed) A. NICOLSON

3. *Progress in Relief Organization. October–November 1914*

DOCUMENT NO. 13

Memorandum, HOOVER TO PAGE, *analyzing the problem of Belgian relief*

LONDON, 20 October 1914

FOR AMBASSADOR PAGE

1.—It appears from our discussions that the problem in Belgium falls under the following heads:—

(A) That the whole population of Belgium is normally dependent on imports for from 75 per cent to 80 per cent of its breadstuffs and

for large proportions of other commodities, while the destruction and requisition of the last harvest by the army has rendered the situation even more acute.

(B) A considerable proportion of the population have resources with which to pay for their food, if some economic rehabilitation can be effected.

(C) That through the entire stagnation of industry, the stoppage of communications and the moratorium, there has been an enormous augmentation in unemployment, which, together with the displacement of the people, has produced unparalleled destitution, with the result that a large section of the population is unable to procure food and clothing without charitable help, even if such food exists in the country.

2.—The present position of attempts to ameliorate this situation is as follows:—

(A) There have sprung up in Belgium a number of committees in various centers, engaged in local relief work, each one acting independently and in competition, mostly intent on solution of local cases, regardless of the whole problem.

(B) Some of these committees, including the Brussels Committee, have obtained undertakings from the German military authorities that they will not requisition food supplies imported for the service of these committees.

(C) Of the various committees which have sent representatives to England, the Brussels Committee has secured a permit to export 2,500 tons of foodstuffs from England.

(D) There are in the United States, the British Empire, and in various parts of the world a number of committees which have sprung up, interested in Belgian relief.

3.—The organization and solution of this problem necessitates:—

(A) The expansion of undertakings by the military authorities not to requisition foodstuffs imported for any portion of Belgium and further to cease the requisition of native foodstuffs.

(B) The permit of the English authorities, conditional on importing foodstuffs in neutral ships from neutral ports, needs extension, so as to include the use of English ships.

(C) In order to provide for the proper distribution of foodstuffs and relief there must be a consolidation of organization in Belgium on national lines with sub-committees in the provinces and communes, under strong centralized control. The Brussels Committee embraces the strongest financial and administrative element in the country, and had already on the 15th inst. considered the question of expansion to the leadership in the creation of this national organization. To assist in the extension of an organization, and to provide an element of cohesion, additional American membership to that of Messrs. Heineman, Hulse, and Gibson must be recruited at once.

(D) In order to provide for the purchase and shipment of foodstuffs abroad, for the mobilization of charity throughout the world, and for the guardianship of the supplies in Belgium and the supply

of American members to Belgian committees, an American Committee will be set up under the patronage of the American Ambassadors and Ministers, with a head office in London and branches in New York, Rotterdam, and elsewhere, as may become necessary.

(E) These two organizations, to co-operate intimately in the solution of the financial and charitable and administrative problems, should interlock by membership and support. Furthermore, it is impossible to handle the situation except with the strongest centralization and effective monopoly, and therefore the two organizations will refuse to recognize any element except themselves alone.

4.—It is absolutely necessary, in order to solve the financial situation outside of charity, to obtain from the belligerent governments permits for exchange transactions in and out of Belgium, and that in the first instance the organization should obtain possession of Belgian bank balances abroad, making counter-payments to the Belgian owners, from the sale of foodstuffs in Belgium, thus avoiding the actual transfer of money over the frontier. Furthermore, the organizations will require a large amount of working capital with which to buy foodstuff and put it in transit, and therefore an endeavor should be made to effect a loan in England, guaranteed by the Belgian banks, for this purpose.

In the matter of the care of the destitute, we have in hand £100,000 contributed by the Belgian Relief Fund at Le Havre, and have an assurance of a contribution of £100,000 from the British Government. These sums, however, will be wholly inadequate, and as the flow of public charity, no matter how great, will be irregular and of uncertain quantity, it is absolutely necessary to secure positive subventions from the Allied Governments in some form or other.

5.—The English Government has already given Mr. Shaler permission to purchase and export a small amount of foodstuffs to the city of Brussels. As this permission was for a very small quantity, it would be insufficient for the entire situation until we could get imports from overseas, and therefore we must seek further permits for emergency purposes.

6.—The present small permits for Brussels, granted by the British Government, stipulate that the food shall be shipped through the American Ambassador in London to the American Minister in Brussels. Such an arrangement is impracticable for the provision of the entire country, and it is therefore necessary to seek an arrangement with the Allied Governments whereby this guarantee can be carried out by the American Committee and its delegates in various centers in substitution of the Minister.

7.—It appears that there was a great deal of antagonism on the part of the Allies to the introduction of foodstuffs into Belgium, as in their view it was the duty of the occupying army to feed the civil population. On the other hand, it was certain that the occupying army would do nothing of the kind and that in order to maintain open a gateway into Belgium and at the same time protect the native food supply from further absorption by the occupying army, it would be necessary to create the widest possible feeling, both in the

belligerent and in neutral countries, as to the rights of the Belgian population in this unparalleled case of an entire country, under practical siege, which was dependent normally upon importation for its food supply, that, therefore, one of the first duties of the American organization would be to create such public opinion as widely as possible, through the Press.

8.—As it is yet uncertain what absolute minimum monthly importation of food supplies would maintain the population alive, this matter must be investigated and reported upon at once.

(Signed) H. C. Hoover

DOCUMENT NO. 14

Telegram, Hoover to Whitlock, *describing the proposed organization and asking Whitlock's views*

London, 20 October 1914

American Legation, Brussels

As result of conference here between myself representing Americans in Brussels, Messrs. Baron Lambert and Francqui representing Comité together with Mr. Page we suggest that a purely American relief committee for Belgium be set up comprising Mr. Whitlock and Mr. Page and leading Americans in Brussels and London which committee would undertake systematic work of facilitating import of supplies under American Government protection and especially to undertake proper and systematic expenditure of funds for Belgian relief now being raised in America. Such committee being properly recognized by the various governments concerned would put matters on permanent systematic neutral basis. Would be glad if Mr. Whitlock would communicate his views to Mr. Page.

Herbert Hoover

DOCUMENT NO. 15

Memorandum—Minutes of a meeting held at No. 1 London Wall Buildings, London, when the C.R.B. was organized

London, 22 October 1914

Present: Messrs. H. C. Hoover
Millard Hunsiker
John B. White
Clarence Graff
Edgar Rickard
Hugh S. Gibson
Millard Shaler
Captain J. F. Lucey

Mr. Hoover stated that the American Ambassador has asked him to set up an organization to carry into execution the engagements undertaken by the American Ambassadors in London and Brussels

with regard to the importation of foodstuffs and relief generally for Belgium.

It was resolved:

1. That this body should constitute itself: "The American Commission for Relief in Belgium."

2. That the American Ambassadors in England, Belgium, and Holland should be Honorary Chairmen.

3. That Herbert Hoover should be Chairman.

4. That Daniel Heineman should be Vice-Chairman.

5. That Clarence Graff should be Treasurer.

6. That Millard Shaler and W. Hulse should be Honorary Secretaries.

7. That Mr. John B. White should take charge of the purchase and transportation of foodstuffs in England, Mr. Edgar Rickard should take charge of publicity, and Captain Lucey take charge of the Rotterdam office.

8. It was resolved that the members of the Committee should comprise the American Consuls in Rotterdam, Ghent, Brussels, Liège, Ostend, and London, and that offices should be opened in each of these Consulates for the Commission.

9. The Chairman reported that arrangements had been made for complete co-operation with the Comité Central de Secours et d'Alimentation Belge; that Messrs. Heineman and Hulse were already members of this Committee, and that it was the purpose of the American Commission to purchase and forward food supplies under their guardianship to the various branches of the Belgian Committee, and that the Belgian Committee has already placed at its disposal £120,000, and that foodstuffs had been purchased and charters entered into for its transport to Rotterdam.

10. A telegram was drafted to Mr. Thomas J. Ryan of New York and ordered to be dispatched.

11. The Chairman was requested to formulate a letter to the American Ambassador as to the organization of the Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 16

Statement,[11] HOOVER TO THE AMERICAN PRESS, *describing the organization of the C.R.B., its co-operation with the Belgian committee, and the immediate need of emergency relief*

LONDON, 22 October 1914

At a meeting at the American Embassy today of all who are concerned in Belgian relief, including Emile Francqui and Baron Lambert of the Belgian committee,[12] the organization of the American

[11] From an article in the *New York Sun,* 23d October 1914.

[12] As a matter of fact MM. Francqui and Lambert came to London as representatives of the Comité Central of Brussels. Upon their return to Belgium after these conferences with Hoover, Page, and others, there was a reorganization of the Comité Central, which early in November became the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

commission was completed. In addition to Ambassador Page and the American Ambassadors at Brussels and The Hague the Spanish Ambassadors at Brussels and London joined the commission as honorary chairmen.

The commission consists of Herbert C. Hoover, who was head of the American refugees' committee in London, chairman; Daniel Heineman of Brussels, vice-chairman; Mr. Graff of the American relief committee, treasurer; Millard K. Shaler, who came to London as representative of Minister Brand Whitlock, and Mr. Hulse of Brussels, secretaries. J. B. White is to have charge of the purchase and exportation of foodstuffs. Captain Lucey will have charge of the Rotterdam office.

Other members of the committee are Messrs. Hunsiker [of London] and Gibson of the American Legation at Brussels, Mr. Rickard, and the American Consuls at London, Antwerp, Brussels, Ostend, Liège, and Ghent. The commission will have an office in each of these cities, as it is intended to assist in provisioning all Belgium. It will co-operate fully with the Belgian committee.

Food to the value of $250,000 already has been bought in the name of Ambassador Page and Minister Whitlock, and arrangements have been made to begin its distribution to the local Belgian branches on October 26. The commission has received considerable sums in addition to the various Belgian funds.

Operations in the market today revealed that owing to Great Britain's demands the food stocks here may not be depleted. Because of the restrictions on the exportation of food it is extremely difficult to find even emergency provisions here, and supplies from America are even more imperatively needed than was originally expected. The difficulties become more embarrassing in view of the insistent requests received by the commission today for the expeditious despatch of the supplies already obtained.

The supplies available at the relief stations in Brussels Monday were believed to be sufficient to last until Saturday, and these were available only because a certain quantity of wheat was received from Antwerp. That source is now exhausted. The commission learns that the food supply at Charleroi is exhausted and that the people are subsisting entirely on potato soup.

A representative of the relief committee at Liège arrived here today to make representations of the urgency there in consequence of the non-arrival of supplies. It is obvious that with the scarcity of foodstuffs in Holland it is impossible to get supplies on that side for more than emergency service. A stream of supplies must be started from America if the Belgians are to be saved from famine.

The commission emphasizes that it is essential that supplies be sent by neutral ships, arrangements having been made with Great Britain that such shipments will not be interfered with in entering the ports designated by the commission. Germany has given ample assurance to the American Legation at Brussels that the importation and distribution of food to the civilians in Belgium will not be interrupted.

London, February 25, 1916.

Dear Mr. Hoover:

My understanding of the organization and operation of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium is this—

That it came into being around you and at your suggestion and in response to your impulse to do this great work of philanthropy;

that, since nobody knew how big it would grow to be nor how long it would be needed, you yourself took command. The gentlemen you called in understood and accepted your leadership and kindly gave their help;

that the Commission never had any legal existence, but that the Governments which have had important dealings with it have had these dealings with you; and that you alone are financially responsible for its moneys and that therefore you must be in a great measure controll.

All the work of the Commission has been voluntary and has been under your sole direction; and membership on the Commission can be accepted only on this condition, since the body has no legal existence.

The work could not have been done in any other way and it is not, of course, the late (and unnecessary, because,) time to discuss any change in the organization—so long as you continue the work.

Yours sincerely,

[illegible]

Herbert C. Hoover, Esq.,
c/o London City Offices,
[illegible]

DOCUMENT NO. 17

Telegram, WHITLOCK TO PAGE, *approving the organization and suggesting the inclusion of the Spanish Minister at Brussels in the membership*

BRUSSELS, 25 October 1914

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

October twenty-fifth. I am quite in accord with the proposal contained in Mr. Hoover's telegram October twentieth to organize an American relief committee to supply food to the civil population in Belgium. The name of the Spanish Minister here however should not be omitted from the organization. He has worked earnestly and efficiently and because of our friendship it would be embarrassing to me if he were to be made to suffer in his feelings by anything that might be interpreted as a slight. Thank you all for your cordial sympathetic and intelligent assistance.

WHITLOCK, *American Minister*

DOCUMENT NO. 18

Letter, PAGE TO WALTER RUNCIMAN, *introducing Hoover as acting under his direction in relief matters*

LONDON, 26 October 1914

The Rt. Hon. Walter Runciman, M.P.
Board of Trade

DEAR MR. RUNCIMAN:

In a conversation I had today with Sir E. Grey regarding relief supplies for Belgium he consented to my communicating with you direct on the subject. I accordingly venture to do so and ask permission to introduce to you Mr. H. C. Hoover of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, who is acting under my direction.

I understand that Mr. Hoover has today made application to the Board of Trade for permits for the exportation of supplies to Belgium* and I should be greatly obliged if their issue could be expedited.

Believe me, dear Mr. Runciman,

Yours sincerely
(Signed) WALTER HINES PAGE

* Only the £30,000 worth that you kindly consent shall be allowed to go.

DOCUMENT NO. 19

Telegram, PAGE TO SECRETARY OF STATE, *on formation of the Commission and advising that American committees should confer with Hoover*

AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON
26 October 1914

THE SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON

The Commission of Belgian Relief working under diplomatic guidance of Spanish Ambassador here and myself has written assurance of the German military commander of Belgian territory held by the Germans that food sent them by this Commission will not be confiscated. So far as I know this assurance has not been given to any one else who may send food. No food can be exported from England or Holland, but the Netherlands Government has given this Commission permission to distribute food landed at Rotterdam through our agents to people in Belgian territory. Since food cannot be bought on this side the world, American committees should not send money but should confer with Hoover, Chairman of this Commission, care of this Embassy, regarding what kind of food to send and how to ship it. Commission has agents in every neighborhood in Belgium. It has in fact taken charge of practically all grocery stores. Money sent will be of no use. Food sent except through Commission may never reach Belgium or be confiscated.

PAGE

DOCUMENT NO. 20

Letter, HOOVER TO THE DIPLOMATIC PATRONS OF THE C.R.B., *reporting on the progress made during the first week of the C.R.B.'s existence*

LONDON, 3 November 1914

To Their Excellencies:

THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR IN LONDON
THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN LONDON
THE AMERICAN MINISTER, BRUSSELS
THE SPANISH MINISTER, BRUSSELS
THE AMERICAN MINISTER, THE HAGUE
Honorary Chairmen, The Commission for Relief in Belgium

Your Excellencies:

This Commission, appointed by your good selves has on the 31st ultimo, completed its first week of organized effort and we therefore

take this occasion to report to you the results so far attained and to set out the pressing necessities in this work.

We have now been, as you are aware, advised by our members in Belgium, who are co-operating with the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, which has branches all over the country, that to all intents and purposes the food supply of Belgium is exhausted and that the problem now confronting us is of wider import than was originally expected, as it now amounts to the provisioning of the whole nation, rich as well as poor. They estimate that the absolute minimum of foodstuffs which will be required as from the 1st of November is 80,000 tons of cereals per month together with some amount of bacon or lard, this being calculated upon the provision of a ration per diem of 10 oz. per capitum, or considerably less than one-half of a soldier's ration. This, as we informed you, is in contrast to the normal imports and products of Belgium of something over 250,000 tons of cereals per month.

We are also informed that the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation have, in co-operation with the various local authorities in Belgium, arranged to take possession of all private stores of foodstuffs in excess of three months' requirements in the hands of any one individual. There are probably not many of such stores, however, but the Comité wishes to be in a position to equitably distribute whatever there may be over the entire population.

We are able to furnish your good selves with a large amount of data as to the position of various communities in Belgium some of whose foodstuffs have already been exhausted for some days. We are however assuming that there will be secured a certain amount of supplementary food from these sources which will assist in getting over the temporary emergency until the provisioning efforts as a whole can be put on a more definite footing than at present, and the problem is so large that we are compelled in any event to risk this. We are therefore assuming that if we can deliver 40,000 tons during the month of November the situation could probably be kept going and violence can probably be prevented. We are convinced, however, that we must be prepared to deliver 80,000 tons monthly from the 1st December and that this will have to be maintained until the next harvest. The cost of this supply will be somewhere about £800,000 to £1,000,000 per month and while a great number of people in Belgium are believed to be able to pay for the food delivered we have yet to devise some method by which a country devoid of credit documents can translate some form of obligation into the purchase of goods. In any event it is not likely that more than one-half of the total sum involved can be paid in this form, even if we can find a method.

The positive food which we now have in sight under various arrangements which we have made is as follows:

Origin	Ships	Tons	Anticipated Arrival in Belgium	Approximate Cost to This Commission Delivered in Belgium
Bought in London.....	"Koblentz" "Iris" "Jan Blocks"	4,200	Nov. 3–7th	£ 50,000
Bought in London.....	Not yet secured	4,500	Nov. 12th	53,000
Rockefeller Foundation gift	"Massapequa"	4,000	Nov. 20th	4,000
Bought in New York..	"Terschelling"	4,000	Nov. 24th	55,000
Novia Scotia gift.....	"Tremorvah"	2,100	Nov. 18th	2,000
Joint purchase with DeForest Committee...	Unknown	4,000	Nov. 25th	35,000
Totals for November.....		22,800		£199,000
San Francisco ship.....		4,000	Dec. 25th	£ 10,000
Chicago ship.....		4,000	Dec. 15th	10,000
Northwestern Miller ship.....		4,000	Dec. 30th	10,000
Probable for December.....		12,000		£ 30,000
Possible Australian meat ships.....		?		

The total funds which we have available are as follows:

In hand	
Contribution from the Comité National	£ 20,000
Contribution through His Excellency Count de Lalaing	100,000
	£120,000
Promised	
Subsidy from British Government	100,000
Total	£220,000

You will see therefore that we have more than consumed our entire resources in the provision of the above and yet we show a deficiency of 17,200 tons for November delivery and 68,000 tons for December delivery. It has now become necessary and positively critical for us to have some sort of definite financial backing.

It appears to us that this emergency of provisioning a whole nation is of such an order that we cannot depend upon the efforts of private philanthropy for its positive solution and that the brunt

of this must fall upon the three Governments which are so critically involved in this situation, viz.: Belgium, England, and France. Whilst every possible device to secure private philanthropy will be used by this Commission and no doubt will result, there still remains the fact that such a supply is not dependable and that if the situation is to be handled properly and systematically we have got to have a substratum of government subvention. It is useless to tell us that when we have expended some allotment of money that we can apply for more because if this problem is to be handled we have got to make arrangements now for future supplies for three or more months and we cannot depend on the "gifts of the gods" to meet such eventualities. For transportation purposes we must charter ships extending over months and we must be assured of eventual money to make up by purchase in the best markets of the world deliveries to supplement such deficiencies as may arise amongst our voluntary offerings, and furthermore in the securing of such voluntary offerings if we had behind us a solid substratum of income we could stimulate this quarter to very much greater advantage.

As you are aware we have forwarded an appeal to the American people by His Majesty King Albert. We have followed this with strong statements as to the position from ourselves. We have asked the Belgian Government to place at our disposal the money secured for Belgian Relief in the United States, and in order to organize the various efforts being made in America we have asked the governors of each of the large agricultural states to appoint a commission to collect and receive food in each of these territories. It would most materially assist this collection of food if we could say to these good people throughout the United States that this Commission will at its own cost undertake the entire transport of foodstuffs which may be secured. The value of cereal foodstuffs taken in bulk delivered into Belgium is between £10 and £12 per ton, of which something like £2 per ton may be taken as transport costs. Therefore, practically £5 of food will be secured for every pound of expenditure made in this manner. If it can be arranged that we have guaranteed subvention of this kind from the three Governments concerned assuring us a minimum of £400,000 per month we are confident that we can handle the situation, or by means of the differences on gifts of goods and the recovery on resale we should be able to make up the margin. This may be a tight squeeze but on the other hand it might be found that during the first flow of philanthropy we might not require the whole of this sum but as you will be well aware, it is almost impossible to keep such a flow stimulated for a period of eight months.

Yours faithfully
For the Commission

(Signed) H. C. Hoover, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 21

Statement,[13] F. D. Acland in the House of Commons, *explaining the attitude of the British Government toward Belgian relief*

House of Commons, 18 November 1914

Earl of Ronaldshay asked the Prime Minister whether the British Government has given its consent to large shipments of flour and food being sent to Belgium by an American Committee; whether some of these foodstuffs are being shipped from the Port of London; and whether, seeing that Belgium is in German occupation and requisitions of food and money are constantly levied upon the inhabitants, he will say what steps are being taken to secure that these shipments shall not benefit the enemy?

Mr. Acland:[14] On the 16th October Marshal von der Goltz gave to the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels a written guarantee that foodstuffs imported into Belgium by the Relief Committee acting under their joint patronage for the maintenance of the civil population would not be requisitioned by the military, but would remain at the sole disposal of the committee. In consideration of this guarantee, and at the request of the United States, Spanish, and Belgian Governments, His Majesty's Government have undertaken not to interfere with shipments of foodstuffs from neutral countries in neutral bottoms consigned to the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels, or to the United States Consul at Rotterdam. I understand from the United States Ambassador that consignments shipped to the United States Consul at Rotterdam will be warehoused at that port and will be forwarded as need arises to the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels. His Majesty's Government have made a Grant of £100,000 to the Belgian Government for the purchase of foodstuffs towards the cost of these supplies. This undertaking does not apply to general shipments of foodstuffs from this country. Any application for permission to export foodstuffs to Belgium from the United Kingdom is, therefore, considered by the Board of Trade in each individual case in the same way and on the same principles as are held to govern other applications for permission to export articles the export of which is restricted or prohibited. Permits have, I believe, been given in certain cases to export foodstuffs to Belgium, consigned to the United States and Spanish Ministers at Brussels. Where a permit is so granted, the foodstuffs exported are, of course, protected by the guarantees which I have mentioned. I believe a great part of these food supplies are purchased by money subscribed in the United States to relieve distress of Belgians, and the greatest care is taken that it should go to that and to no other object.

[13] *Great Britain—Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons (Fifth Series), Volume LXVIII: 416, 18 Nov. 1914.

[14] F. D. Acland, Esq., M.P., Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Affairs.

DOCUMENT NO. 22

Note, GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO GERARD, *giving official approval to the C.R.B., and guaranteeing freedom from seizure to non-neutral vessels carrying supplies of the C.R.B. to Dutch ports*

GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
23 November 1914

TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Foreign Office has the honor to inform the Embassy of the United States of America in answer to the verbal note of November 14, F.O. 1105, that the Imperial Government is in complete sympathy with the meritorious efforts of the American Commission in Belgium to provide the population of that country with foodstuffs. The Imperial Government therefore—until further notice and with reservation of any recall which may become necessary at any time—gladly consents that the transportation of the said foodstuffs to Dutch harbors take place also in other than neutral vessels, and will grant in this case also the same guarantee for the disposition of the foodstuffs, according to agreement, as if the transportation had been made in neutral vessels. In order to obviate seizure by German war vessels at sea, it is advisable that such non-neutral vessels be provided with a certificate of a competent American authority, in which it is stated that the vessel carries foodstuffs which are to be brought through the agency of the American Commission for Relief with the consent of the German Government by way of Dutch harbors into Belgium for the supplying of the population there; and it is furthermore advisable that the non-neutral vessels also carry with them a pass from the Imperial German Ambassador in Washington to be issued on the basis of the aforesaid certificate.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 23

Extract from "Rapport du Comité Executif pour le mois de Novembre 1914," pp. 3–4, Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation

. . . . On the receipt of this letter[15] it was decided to send to London a delegation composed of Baron Lambert and Mr. Francqui. These gentlemen, accompanied by Mr. Gibson, Secretary of the United States Legation, were requested to lay before the British Government the desperate situation in which the country was as regards reserves of foodstuffs.

The object of this mission was principally to obtain the consent of the British Government, in view of the guarantees of the German Government, to authorize the importation into Belgium of all the

[15] Von der Goltz to Whitlock, 16th October 1914. See Document 7.

products coming from neutral countries destined to the Belgian civil population. The English Government kindly gave the necessary authority on condition that the products which should be imported with the above mentioned object should be conveyed to the Belgian frontier under the protection of the representatives of Spain and the United States in London and The Hague and that from the frontier to the distribution warehouses in Belgium, the transport of these products should be made under the protection of the Ministers of Spain and the United States of America in Brussels.

Under these conditions there was no further obstacle to the formation of the Committee.

In consequence Baron Lambert and Mr. Francqui immediately consulted Mr. Page, United States Ambassador in London, on the measures to be taken to assure the feeding of Belgium.

The conclusion was quickly arrived at that the Comité National, in order to be in a position to accomplish its task, should be seconded by an organization abroad which, working under the patronage of the representatives of Spain and the United States in London, Berlin, Brussels, and The Hague, should purchase the food and assure its transport to the centers of distribution in Belgium.

This organization should also undertake a propaganda campaign to bring foreign nations to the aid of the Belgian population by means of gifts.

There existed in London at that time a committee under the presidency of Mr. Herbert Hoover which, at the commencement of the war, had been constituted at the instance of the United States Government to facilitate the repatriation of all the American subjects in Europe.

This committee, which had just accomplished its task, was about to dissolve. Ambassador Page, considering that it could render service to the new undertaking which had been projected, put Mr. Francqui in touch with Mr. Hoover, proposing to the latter to maintain the assembly which he had formed and to make it act for the revictualment of Belgium.

Mr. Hoover was good enough to accept this proposition. In the course of several interviews which they had together, Messrs. Hoover and Francqui laid the foundation of the new organization of which details will be found later on.

Baron Lambert and Mr. Francqui having achieved their mission returned to Brussels and reported to the Comité Central the result of their efforts.

The Comité Central immediately decided that nothing further prevented their assuming the task of aiding and feeding the country and constituted itself the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The organization abandoned in consequence the direct administration of the organization created for the Brussels District and decided to consider in the future the said District of Brussels as one of the branches of the Comité National. . . . .

[*Translation*]

Chapter II

THE ORGANIZATION OF RELIEF ADMINISTRATION

The administrative machinery of relief necessarily changed in a variety of details to meet new conditions as the war passed from one phase to another. But in spite of these changes of detail Mr. Hoover's original conception that penetration of the blockade and the Occupation Zones could be accomplished only through the intervention of Americans with authorizations and guarantees from both belligerent groups and under the patronage of powerful neutral governments, remained a fundamental of relief organization through the whole course of the work in Belgium and France. As a result the Commission came to be regarded as a kind of informal state with its own international agreements, its special privileges and immunities from the belligerents, its own flag, and so forth. At the same time the Commission bore the responsibility of constantly giving evidence of the essential purpose of its work and unbroken fidelity to that purpose.

The establishment of this international standing and prestige of the Commission was one of the most important problems of relief. Another was finance, which included the mobilization of public charity, the institution of exchange operations, and the procurement of government subsidies. A third was the provision of supplies and the organization of their oversea transportation from all corners of the globe. This involved the establishment of a network of purchasing organizations embracing all the food-exporting regions of the world, and the acquisition and management of a fleet of cargo ships. A fourth problem was the determination of the needs of the population from time to time, the formulation of a program based on those needs, and the securing of the approval of these programs from the belligerents. All of these functions were performed by the Americans constituting the active personnel of the Commission. A fifth problem concerned the distribution of commodities in Belgium and Northern France. This was

accomplished by numerous Belgian committees centralized in accordance with Mr. Hoover's request, in the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation for Belgium, and French committees headed by the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France. The Belgian and French organizations acted independently of each other but each acted jointly with the Commission which was directly represented by American members throughout the occupied territories. Thus, whereas the Commission was solely responsible to the belligerent governments for all external relief activities, i.e., charity, finance, purchase, and transportation, the responsibility of distribution in Belgium was shared with the Comité National, and in Northern France[1] with the Comité Français, the members occupying the same central offices and co-operating fully.

The complex situation in Belgian and French territories under German rule combined with the conditions imposed by the Allies made the work of the administration of the Commission extremely difficult. Absolute neutrality in word and act, vigilance and firmness in guarding the interests of the population, and tact in official relationships were essential to the success of the enterprise. The documents which follow indicate the character of the major emergencies affecting the form of organization in Belgium.

1. *First Measures. November 1914*

As soon as the preliminary diplomatic guarantees had been secured, the newly formed Commission for Relief in Belgium began to build its oversea organization. On the 25th October 1914 Hoover sent Captain J. F. Lucey and M. K. Shaler to Rotterdam to arrange for the transshipment into Belgium of two cargoes then loading in the Thames. Lucey,

[1] The C.R.B. did not undertake the responsibility for the relief of the 2,000,000 people in the invaded French territories until April 1915, five months after the commencement of the Belgian work. Since the French territories were governed by German military authorities, while Belgium (except East and West Flanders) was under a German civil government, the functions and activities of the French and Belgian committees were by no means the same. Another reason for distinction between the two national distributing organizations was that the funds turned over to the Commission for relief came from different sources. These and other characteristics of the relief in Northern France are illustrated by the documents in chapter vi.

after making, with the co-operation of Dr. van Dyke, the American Minister, the necessary arrangements with the Dutch Government,[2] energetically attacked the difficult matter of establishing an efficient system for the movement of supplies. Shaler crossed the frontier into Belgium where the struggles to organize the scattered local committees into a unified body were complicated by the general confusion, lack of communication, and German restrictions on civilian activities. The representatives of the first Belgian committee, M. van den Branden, Mr. W. Hulse, and later M. Hymans, whom the Germans had allowed to cross the Dutch frontier, could give Lucey neither definite information regarding the internal relief organization nor specific recommendations as to where to direct the first food shipments. Information from other sources was abundant but conflicting. Appeals, rumors, orders, suggestions came in showers from local committees, refugees, American consuls in Belgian cities, from the American Legation in Brussels and the Comité Central. Lucey's reports to Hoover, of which Document 24 is a sample, reflect the confusion of these first days and the impatience of an energetic executive entangled in official red tape and a maze of doubtful information. The first food shipment went promptly across the frontier, but serious difficulties beset the line of communication until the Comité National was completely organized and the C.R.B. had set up its own machinery in Belgium.

DOCUMENT NO. 24

Letter, LUCEY TO HOOVER, *describing confused situation in Belgium as reported by local officials, refugees, and others*

ROTTERDAM, 29 October 1914

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
Chairman American Commission for
Relief in Belgium
London

DEAR SIR:

GENERAL REPORT No. 4

Replying to your telegram of this morning, requesting that we advise you character and weekly amount of food supplies, we may

[2] The attitude of the Dutch Government toward Belgian relief was helpful from the beginning. U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1914 Supplement, pp. 820–22.

say that we shall be unable to do this for a few days. We are sending Mr. Hymans of the Belgian Committee from here to get this information. We have details from Liège and vicinity, as per enclosed copy of statement made by the two deputies of Liège. We are also going to obtain for you all the details as to the number of relief stations and the people. As near as we can ascertain there are approximately four millions of people to be fed. Provisions must be provided whether the people have money or not. For instance, the deputies representing Liège have Frs. 500,000, but are unable to purchase any supplies without permission of the Dutch authorities, and this Government has commandeered all of the flour and wheat in the country, and you can only purchase direct from the Government.

As advised you by wire, we are going to see the Prime Minister this afternoon and arrange to purchase 5,000 tons of flour, agreeing to replace this by shipment from America. We consider the statement of the deputies of Liège sufficiently urgent to send it on to you by telegram, and we are enclosing you confirmation of same herewith. We are keeping the original on file here, and shall be glad to forward same to you if you wish it.

We further attach translation of article appearing in the Dutch press. We thought it would be better to have a statement of this character, as it would immediately bring to us all people who had food supplies for sale as well as transportation facilities.

At the same time we enclose copy of letter received from the Belgian Vice Consul, who made a special call on behalf of Liège, subsequently introducing two deputies from the district. Enclosed also please find copy of memorandum dictated by the writer from Mr. Hymans and Mr. Branden.

We have asked all these gentlemen to give some more complete details and we have only obtained from them this written statement to protect ourselves.

We are convinced, as stated in our telegram, that we have all underestimated the desperate condition of the Belgian people. For instance, Namur had a population of 40,000 people, and we are authorized by two of the gentlemen from the Belgian committee to state that there are only ten houses left. They advise that these people must have clothes and bedding as well as food. This office will gladly undertake to deliver all these supplies to the Belgian people.

The great and urgent necessity is for flour. If we could get about 25,000 tons of flour, we could relieve the immediate necessities. All of these gentlemen advise me that there is a great danger of revolution, particularly in the vicinity of Liège. The people are so hungry and so desperate that the sight of every German incites them, and in their desperate frame of mind, seeing their children and families without food or clothes, they are liable to attack the German soldiers at any moment, which would mean another terrible and useless sacrifice of the Belgian people. The American Commission and the American people can avoid this, and I would urge you to resort to any measures to relieve these districts. Could you not obtain a fast cruiser from the American Government to deliver the first cargo of flour?

We are calling upon the Dutch Minister this afternoon, and if we obtain results we will wire you again this afternoon. We believe that if you could wire that flour is en route, the writer could go into the districts of Liège, Charleroi, Namur, and Dinant, or any member of our Commission could do so, accompanied by the Belgian officials, and satisfy the people and restrain them from resorting to any violence until we can deliver the flour.

We are afraid there will be keen disappointment in Brussels upon return of Mr. Hymans, as he came here anticipating that the 10,000 tons of food supplies would be here, Mr. Francqui having made this report to the Comité at Brussels, and they in turn have distributed this information to the various districts. We again repeat: the necessity of the Belgian people is very great; they are in a desperate frame of mind, and if we are to accomplish anything we must act, and act at once.

If there is any statement which you wish to publish in the Dutch press, please forward same and we will have it attended to.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) J. F. Lucey

The American Commission for Relief in Belgium

DOCUMENT NO. 25

Letter, Francqui to Hoover, *describing food, financial, and other difficulties in Belgium*

Brussels, 26 October 1914

My dear Hoover:

On returning here I found the situation much more grave than at my departure. Liège, Namur, Charleroi are absolutely without flour. At Brussels we can scarcely finish the week, and we shall be under the necessity of distributing only 100 grams of flour per inhabitant.

All this shows you the gravity of the situation and the urgency there is, consequently, that there should be sent to Rotterdam as much foodstuffs as possible.

As agreed between us, Mr. van den Branden, delegate of the American committee in Brussels, is leaving today for Rotterdam. This gentleman speaks English very well and he will go to Holland to place himself at the disposal of Captain Lucey. Mr. Hulse, an American engineer whom you know, is leaving at the same time as Mr. van den Branden to install the latter at Rotterdam and inform us in Brussels as to all things necessary as regards the organization of our revictualing work.

At the time of their departure I wired you as follows:

Whitlock entirely in accord regarding your telegram. He is cabling to Washington to centralize all funds and to confide them to you through U.S. Embassy, London. Monthly needs Belgian population, minimum 60,000 grains, 15,000 maize, 3,000 tons rice and dried peas. Have still flour for four days.

Telegraph at once to Hulse care Consulate of U.S. at Rotterdam:

First, if 10,000 tons purchased London during my stay are or will be sent.

Second, what other quantities of foodstuffs you have purchased and when you hope they will arrive in Rotterdam.

Third, say if you have ordered grain in America; if not, do so at once.

Believe it would be good for Page inform English Government that working capital of hundred thousand pounds altogether insufficient. It would be good not to mention to Foreign Office the hundred thousand pounds that I received from Belgian Minister, and that I transferred to you. Tell also Carton de Wiart make new effort with Government to obtain help in money in same proportions as English Government. Send immediately Lucey to organize general depot at Rotterdam with Hulse. Good wishes.

This telegram is, I believe, very clear in itself. As I told you at the opening of this letter we have in the country only a few thousand sacks of wheat. After that there is nothing, either in the country or in the warehouses. It is therefore necessary that our population should be completely revictualed from the exterior if we do not wish to die of hunger.

In normal times there are in Belgium nearly 8,000,000 people to feed. Therefore, in mentioning 60,000 tons of wheat as being indispensable for the country you will see that I estimate less than 300 grams of wheat per inhabitant and per diem, which gives a little less than 200 grams of flour per person. This quantity is evidently insufficient, but account must be taken of the 15,000 tons of maize which I have also asked for. With this maize we will make flour which we will mix with the wheaten flour, which will thus bring up the daily ration per person to nearly 300 grams.

In my telegram I asked you several questions relative to all the orders which you have placed, whether in London or America.

As regards the orders in London, I of course only refer to the 10,000 tons which you ordered during my stay in London. It is for us of the highest importance that we should know if Mr. Page and yourself have succeeded in persuading Sir Edward Grey that it is indispensable to allow you to dispatch these supplies at once.

As regards American orders, I thought it well to ask you if you had placed these orders. It is, in fact, necessary to have three or four weeks before we can hope to receive the first consignments, and, by reason of the precarious situation in which we are placed, no time should be lost.

Another question which it is also important to settle at once is that of money. The purchase abroad of 60,000 tons of wheat, 15,000 tons of maize, and 3,000 tons of rice and dried peas, will necessitate the immobilization of £800,000 to £1,000,000. This supply for one month will always be maintained in our warehouses or in transit, and its value, i.e., £800,000 to £1,000,000, will, in fact, be a revolving fund which is indispensable for the proper operating of our relief organization.

Now, we have in all and for all the £100,000 which the British Government has placed at the disposal of our Ambassador, as well

as the £100,000 which I obtained from the Belgian Government and which I had transferred to your credit. There is therefore lacking £600,000 to £800,000.

It was after having made this little calculation that I thought well of notifying you by cable that it would be a good thing to tell the British Government that the £100,000 which they gave us were absolutely insufficient.

I also asked you in my telegram to speak of all this to Mr. Carton de Wiart, who, I believe, knows the French Ambassador in London, in order that he should remind the latter of the promise which he had made to Baron Lambert, to cause his government to intervene in this question of revictualing the Belgian populations, who have been already so much tried.

There is, lastly, another point which we have not succeeded in solving here. It is as to how we are going to transfer to London, in order to enable you to make new purchases, the money which we shall receive here against part of the supplies which we import into Belgium, thanks to yourselves.

The German Government forbids us—all banks and individuals—to export the smallest coin into no matter what country with which they are at war.

On the other hand, by reason of the complete stoppage of business, it is impossible to buy exchange here, either on Holland or America, or on any other neutral country.

We shall perhaps find in the banks assets of £500,000 to £600,000 in America, in Holland, in Spain, and in Italy, but that will hardly enable us to live more than several weeks.

For my part, I do not see any possibility of solving this problem except by effecting a loan in London, it being understood that we should deposit with the Banque Nationale de Belgique at Brussels all the money which we may receive here in payment for supplies imported.

I am notifying the Belgian Government of this special situation by a letter of which you will find copy attached.

If you wish to write me, do so by the intermediary of Captain Lucey or of the American Consulate at Rotterdam, who will then send your mail by one or other of the men who bring the correspondence of the Minister of the United States here.

You might leave your letters open, in order that Mr. Hulse or any other of your compatriots at Rotterdam may acquaint themselves with their contents and thus arrive at a knowledge of our *desiderata.*

On the other hand, I believe that you will do well to communicate what I write you to Mr. Carton de Wiart, who is, as you know, the brother of our Minister of Justice, and who can—I do not doubt—second your efforts by intervening with the Belgian Government.

By all that I have written you will see that the mission which your good heart has caused you to accept is very complicated. I was able, during my short stay in London, to see how high were your sentiments of humanity and for this reason it is with the greatest confidence that I face with yourself the very difficult task which we have undertaken.

On returning to Brussels, I found a letter from my son who, after many difficulties, succeeded in reaching one of my friends in Holland, with whom he is today staying. Thanks a thousand times, my dear Hoover, for all that you have done in helping me to find him again.

Your very grateful

(Signed) E. FRANCQUI

[*Translation*]

Immediately after the conferences in London with Hoover on the 18th and 19th October Francqui had returned to Brussels to expand the organization of the Brussels Comité Central to embrace all of Belgium. The scheme of organization covered the whole country by means of committees and subcommittees. Belgium was divided into ten areas more or less corresponding to the provincial divisions and eleven provincial committees were established, an extra committee having jurisdiction over the city of Brussels apart from the province of Brabant in which this city is situated. Under each provincial committee were grouped regional committees and, finally, under these, communal committees. The provincial committees had considerable autonomy, but on each was a representative of the Comité National whose headquarters were in Brussels.

DOCUMENT NO. 26

Letter, HOOVER TO FRANCQUI, *outlining the relation of the C.R.B. Rotterdam office to the offices in London and Brussels, the methods of accounting, and the relief campaign inaugurated in America*

LONDON, 14 November 1914

Emile Francqui, Esq., Brussels

MY DEAR FRANCQUI:

It seems desirable that we should get a little more system in the relations of this office and the Rotterdam office with the head committee in Brussels.

It is our feeling that it is entirely impossible to conduct the Rotterdam office from Brussels as communications are so slow between these two points whereas we are in hourly communication, in other words, that the Rotterdam office should be a branch of the London Commission. We are consigning all food to this Rotterdam office, and we desire to have in the Rotterdam office an accountant, experienced in English accounts, if possible selected by your com-

mittee. We propose that the books should be subject to monthly audit by Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company. We also need at the Rotterdam office a representative of the Brussels committee who should be a substantial business man, who will remain there at all times and put himself generally at the disposal of the head of this office, whom we should select. I should suggest that all cheques on the Rotterdam accounts should be signed jointly by the accountant and the head of our organization at Rotterdam. This Rotterdam office is practically a warehousing and forwarding business, and it is their duty to forward foodstuffs sent to them to any portion of Belgium that is designated to them. This allocation as to where foodstuffs have to be sent must absolutely rest with you in Brussels; but we would suggest to you that as the stuff is consigned to the American Minister at the various points in Belgium it would serve as a matter of protection as well as one of system, if when these allocation orders are made out Mr. Whitlock should be asked to put his "O.K." on them, as obviously the shipments cannot go forward except in his name. This approval signed on these allocation orders would be the final court of appeal so far as our Rotterdam office is concerned, that when they have complied with these allocation orders their duty has been done. I do not know whether this will be placing an unnecessarily large amount of detail on Mr. Whitlock, but I feel that in view of the political situation and the clearness with which this will define matters so far as our end of the business is concerned it is a labor which he will be willing to undertake.

It will be the endeavor of the Rotterdam office to send information to Brussels as to the materials which they have in hand and what they expect to receive at given dates, and, so far as we can anticipate it, something as to the character of the contents of the cargoes, in order that these allocations may be made out and the arrangements for the delivery and transportation into Belgium can be greatly expedited if the Rotterdam office has the allocations in hand in anticipation of the arrival of the foodstuffs.

We realize the great difficulties you must have to contend with in communications between various points of the provinces and Brussels, and we have the feeling that if a corps of our Americans can be recruited (in which we are now actively engaged) so that some of these gentlemen may be established as guardians at different centers, these communications will thereby be facilitated, as they can possibly move more freely through the country than your own countrymen.

We are receiving people here from Belgium pressing us to do special services for special towns, and the Rotterdam office is simply flooded with them. It is therefore necessary that all of the communes should be advised that all allocations of the foodstuffs which we handle will be made only on orders signed as above (if you agree that this is the proper system). Large consignments will now be arriving with considerable frequency, and the earlier some such system as this can be devised the better.

In engaging Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company to take charge of the accounts of this office we have instructed them to consider that this is a cargo business and that every shipment of material into Rotterdam shall be accompanied from here by a statement as to the cost thus far, and the Rotterdam office will add their charges and redistribute it in cutting up the cargoes so that their consignments will show the final cost. There has been some delay in getting this done as you cannot appreciate the pressure under which we have been working here. The difficulty primarily arises over the question of gift food, and I propose that we should determine the value of this food at as near the market price as we can, and that we enter on our books the purchase of this food for that sum and as a contra in our books we will enter the sum as a gift to this Commission from the donors of the food. By this system all foodstuffs arriving in Belgium will be given a cash value comparable to the market price and our books will show large subscriptions from various societies and organizations. I may mention that while the above seems simple it is by no means so. For instance, yesterday at three o'clock we received advice that a gift steamer from Nova Scotia had left Dover at 10 o'clock in the morning for Rotterdam; the bill of lading and the contents of the vessel were in London and we had not known until that morning that we should succeed in getting the ship diverted direct to Rotterdam. Therefore the Rotterdam office at the present moment is totally ignorant as to either the contents or the value of the cargo. Furthermore this cargo is made up of some 400 items of different kinds of things, having all been presented, and it is with the greatest difficulty that we shall be able to assess them at all. However, in developing a business which is going to run into a million pounds a month it is going to require some patience on the part of everybody.

I wish to add one word more as to the letter I wrote the other day on the subject of the purpose to which we have set aside the £600,000. It will greatly further our efforts and back up our campaign if you gentlemen will also take the strong attitude that this money has been provided only for transportation purposes, and with this in view it is an imminent necessity that we begin to receive at once some of the £1,000,000 subvention from the Belgian Government. The offer on our part to some score of associations to pay transportation on foodstuffs they would provide has stimulated the presentation of food in the most gratifying manner and is the strongest card which we have yet played.

The following résumé of the position in America may interest you:

We have carried on, with the assistance of practically the whole of the American press, an enormous propaganda on the subject of the Belgian people. We have cabled to all associations of whom we could hear, stimulating them as to position. We have cabled to the governors of every state asking them to see that such an association was set up in their territory and we have so far the following results:

The Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco, at the instance of my wife, who happened to be there, have collected money with which

they have purchased actual foodstuffs to the amount of 5,000 tons and have chartered the ship "Camino" which sails November 30th for Rotterdam.

The Seattle Chamber of Commerce are in progress with the provision of a cargo, and as friends of ours were raising a fund in the state of Idaho we have asked these people to combine to ensure a large ship full.

In the state of Oregon we have a good friend at work but at present can report no definite results.

In the state of Kansas, ex-Governor Stubbs has inaugurated an active campaign for the collection of foodstuffs and is organizing an efficient committee for taking the matter in hand.

In the state of Iowa Mr. Chamberlain is organizing a complete cargo of maize, which is the chief product of that state.

In the state of Minnesota Mr. Edgar, the editor of a trade journal called the *Northwestern Miller,* has got the millers in the northern part of the Mississippi Valley all hard at work, and he assures us that he will secure at least 9,000 tons of flour and is making the first shipment from Philadelphia about the end of November.

The Philadelphia Belgian Relief Committee in co-operation with the *Ladies Home Journal* (for which paper we obtained an autograph letter from the Queen of the Belgians to further the appeal) have already despatched on the 11th November to us the S.S. "Thelma" carrying 2,900 tons of cereals.

The Rockefeller Foundation has despatched the S.S. "Massapequa" carrying 4,000 tons on November 4th, and we have bought a cargo of 4,000 tons which is being shipped on the S.S. "Terschelling" which sailed from New York on the 11th November.

The people of Nova Scotia have already landed in Rotterdam the steamer "Tremorvah" carrying about 2,100 tons of foodstuffs and a lot of clothes. They have now despatched the S.S. "Bankadra" which sailed from Halifax on the 13th instant with 3,000 tons.

The people of Ottawa, Canada, are despatching approximately 4,000 tons at an early date.

The New York Relief Committee are presumably despatching a cargo at an early date, and we have organizations getting on definitely in Spain, Italy, British Columbia, North Carolina, Maine, and Virginia.

We have opened an office in New York and have advised the American public generally that our New York office will undertake the free transportation of foodstuffs into Belgium.

We are taking some steamers on time charter for regular trips across the Atlantic, and we are expecting to supplement the irregular supplies of gift food by purchases to keep these steamers employed.

We have organized a Women's Division of the American Commission in New York and have the co-operation of all of the women's clubs and societies in the United States, and tomorrow they are issuing an appeal to all of these club members to get on pushing food into the hands of the local organizations.

In our London office we are conducting three commissions: i.e.,

the American Commission, the Spanish Commission, and the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation; and we expect to have the Italian Commission launched next week. We combine representatives of all of these commissions into the general organization which we style simply "The Commission for Relief in Belgium," which is dealing with all of the minor points of international complexity.

We have secured the assistance of the two largest shipping firms in England, and they have agreed to handle the whole of our shipping problems for absolutely no cost whatever for commissions or agency charges or anything of that nature, and they have placed one of their most expert men in our office and at our elbow. In like manner we have secured the voluntary services of one of the largest food firms dealing on the Baltic, who are giving us their services on exactly the same terms. We have thought it much better that we should not only take the expert advice and the responsible management of such agencies as this but also it affords some measure of protection to us which might not exist if we endeavored by our own individual effort to arrange such matters as charters and food purchases. These gentlemen have taken the greatest possible interest in the work which we are endeavoring to do and are giving us the most extraordinary services. As an indication of such services you will realize that under the terms of the London Shipping, Food, and Insurance Exchanges these people cannot operate without charging commissions, but they are in this case making subscriptions to our funds of amounts equivalent to such commissions.

. . . . . .

In order to save time and trouble I am sending a copy of this letter to Minister van Dyke and to Minister Whitlock and also to Captain Lucey.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover

2. *The C.R.B. in Belgium. November 1914–January 1915*

The Commission was represented at the start in Belgium by Mr. Hugh Gibson, Secretary of the American Legation, by Mr. Daniel Heineman, Mr. Millard K. Shaler, and Mr. W. Hulse, American engineers. These gentlemen initiated the Commission's work and collaborated with the directors of the Belgian organization. In order to see for himself the exact conditions in Belgium and to hasten the organization of the Brussels office, Mr. Hoover decided, at the end of

November, 1914, to visit Belgium. While in Brussels he went thoroughly into the problems of administration and wrote the following memorandum as a basis of further action.

DOCUMENT NO. 27

General scheme of the organization of the C.R.B. in Belgium as devised in December 1914

BRUSSELS, December 1914

1. The Central Office will be located in Brussels, under the active management of the Belgian members of this committee.

2. As the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation will control its work through ten subcommittees or Comités Provinciaux, each covering a province of Belgium (one province, Brabant, is subdivided for two committees) having its own president and working organization, the C.R.B. proposes to station an authorized delegate in each province (two in Brabant) and at the point where the principal office of the Comité Provincial with its president is located. The Comité National will also station a delegate or two delegates, as case may require, at the same office in the province, who will represent the central organization at Brussels.

3. The delegate of the C.R.B., the delegate of the Comité National, and the President of the Comité Provincial will form the three principals for the affairs of the relief work in the province (see table 1).

4. The business of the delegate of the C.R.B. is to attend to the reception of all merchandise shipped by the C.R.B. into his district, to control same, and to transfer same to the Comité Provincial under the conditions and in the manner to be specified.

5. As it has been clearly stipulated that the grain or other merchandise introduced into Belgium by the C.R.B. is under the responsibility of their Excellencies the Ministers of Spain and of the United States, who, with their colleagues, form the principal factors of the C.R.B., it is essential that the merchandise remain the property of the C.R.B. until the same be distributed to the communes.

6. In consequence of this, the C.R.B. sells none of its merchandise until it be handed over to the communes, and retains full and complete power to dispose of same until the merchandise be placed in the hands of the communes.

As it is, however, impossible for the C.R.B. to create for all of Belgium a sufficiently large organization for handling in all its details the work of storage, milling, short-distance shipments, delivery to communes, etc., all of which is necessary before the merchandise can finally be delivered to the communes, it is proposed that the organization of the Comité Provincial should carry out this work, and that the merchandise be transferred to them (not the ownership or control) for so doing on their order of disposition.

Payment to the C.R.B. must also be guaranteed for its full value by the Comité National before the merchandise can be released to the Comité Provincial by the delegate of the C.R.B. To accomplish such guarantee, the Comité Provincial (with each order for release and disposition addressed to the delegate of the C.R.B.) must place in the hands of the delegate of the Comité National the full value in cash or equivalent of the merchandise specified on the order. The delegate of the Comité National thereupon notifies the delegate of the C.R.B. that the guarantees have been acquitted by signing the order of disposition of the Comité Provincial.

The signature of the delegate of the Comité National (not Provincial) on such an order is understood to be an assurance of payment to the C.R.B. when the merchandise shall have been safely turned over to the communes.

The final payment must then be effected against a receipt signed by the C.R.B.

The signature of the delegate of the Comité National is also a notice that the latter are satisfied with the arrangements for milling, storage, or distribution called for by the Comité Provincial.

All expenses for transportation, milling, storage, insurance, personnel, etc., are to be borne by the Comité Provincial.

The latter Comité will also provide, at their expense, the necessary storehouses.

It is understood that, in spite of the fact that the merchandise has been entrusted for handling to the Provincial Committee, it is still the property of the C.R.B., and the delegate of the C.R.B. is still responsible for its safety until the same is delivered to the communes.

For this reason, it is expressly required that all orders for disposition by the Comité Provincial for milling, transportation, storage, or delivery for distribution, shall be countersigned by the delegate of the C.R.B., and that all of such orders shall expressly state that the material is the property of the C.R.B., and that no order is valid without such signature.

The Comités Provinciaux designate the mills within their provinces where the grinding is to be done; but in some provinces, such as Limbourg and Luxembourg, there are no adequate milling facilities, and flour will have to be delivered them (not grain), utilizing other mills and special means of transport. This milling and transportation will be arranged for by the Central Office of the C.R.B. in conjunction with the Central Office of the Comité National at Brussels; the delegate of the C.R.B. and the delegate of the Comité National and the Provincial President work exactly as described above (omitting milling) for the province in question.

Any transportation matters regarding arrangements with German authorities should be immediately referred to Brussels.

In spite of the fact that the Comité Provincial executes the work, the delegate of the C.R.B. must have complete records as to materials received, delivered to mills, condition of stocks, and distribution to communes, and report weekly thereon as well as upon condition of received merchandise, the difficulties of working, and the effectiveness of the Comité National.

The German authorities have guaranteed that all merchandise introduced by the C.R.B. and distributed by the Comité National for the civil population of Belgium shall not be seized by the German military. To facilitate same, placards have been signed by the German authorities prohibiting the seizure of merchandise identified by these placards. Such placards will be provided by the Brussels office of the C.R.B., and it shall be the duty of the delegate of the C.R.B. to see that all storehouses, mills, or merchandise in transit are properly protected by such placards, taking always receipts for them, keeping trace of them, and seeing same are used honestly and without misrepresentation. In this particular matter, viz., the issuing and using of placards, the delegates of the Comité National and the presidents of the Comités Provinciaux will be held equally responsible, but no placard may be issued without the consent of the delegate of the C.R.B.

Proper military passes for the delegates of the C.R.B. will be provided at the Central Office, Brussels.

The specific authority of the C.R.B. delegate who is responsible only to the C.R.B. is therefore:

1. Absolute charge of merchandise from time of its receipt from Rotterdam until its distribution to the communes. Shall guard and protect same from seizure by use of placards provided, and shall visé all orders of the Comité Provincial for its disposal to mills, distribution, storage, or communes until the time when the same shall have been distributed to the communes.

2. Shall be responsible for the placards.

3. Shall sign all bills of lading or waybills in the name of the ministers for release of the merchandise.

4. Shall carefully check up arrived merchandise so as to assure himself that all merchandise shipped has come to hand. In case of shortage, a claim should be immediately deposited with the shipping officials with whom he has had to deal, and a copy of this claim sent immediately to the C.R.B. in Brussels.

5. Shall, with the delegate of the Comité National, control the general operation of the work of the Comité Provincial, and shall intervene at any step, even to the extent of prohibiting merchandise to be moved, if at any time the responsibilities of the ministers are not being properly guarded.

6. It is explained that storehouses and storekeepers are to be provided for the C.R.B. by the Central Committee for merchandise which cannot be taken over immediately by it, but merchandise stored in these storehouses is solely under the guard and supervision of the delegate of the C.R.B.

7. The delegate of the C.R.B. must, on the receipt of merchandise, inform immediately the C.R.B. in Brussels of: (i) The quantity and description of merchandise received, with information as to whether it arrived in good condition or not. (ii) Whether claims were made against shippers for shortages, bad condition of merchandise, etc. (iii) The disposal of merchandise arrived, as to whether it was taken over immediately by the Central Committee or whether it was placed in the storehouse under the control of the C.R.B.; this information must be given with all details, especially:

(*a*) quantities delivered; (*b*) to whom delivered; (*c*) name of office of Central Committee which has given order for deliveries; (*d*) dates of delivery; (*e*) quantities taken into stock; (*f*) total quantities in stock at moment. Communications with Brussels will be assured by means of a special messenger, who will pass periodically with automobile to take up and deliver letters.

8. All merchandise received must be registered in his stock account as received, whether it goes directly into his storehouse or not. Supposing that a consignment arrives to be turned over, on the order of the Central Committee delegate, directly to the mills without passing through the storehouse, this consignment must be *supposed* to have entered into the storehouse and to have been distributed to the mills. In other words, the books of the delegate of the C.R.B. must show all goods received, and at the same time all distribution of goods to the mills or communes. It is necessary, in making this inscription in the books, to make note of the numbers, date, quantities, and persons signing the orders of distribution.

9. In case of merchandise being shipped to the delegates of the C.R.B. to be later transferred to another, the first-named delegate must handle the merchandise just as if it had been consigned for his section, inscribing it as received and as shipped farther to another section. Any bills of lading or railway receipts which may be necessary must be made out and sent forward in the same way as shown in the instructions entitled "Bills of Lading" or "Railway Consignments," as the case may be. For example:

Suppose that 20,000 sacks of grain be forwarded to Louvain to be ground into flour, with the intention of sending the flour forward to Arlon, the delegate of the Louvain section must see to it that the Louvain mills receive the grain, grind it into flour, and reship it to Arlon. He must, furthermore, receive on his books the grain into stock, issue it on his books to the mills from his stock, and make note of all expenses incurred.

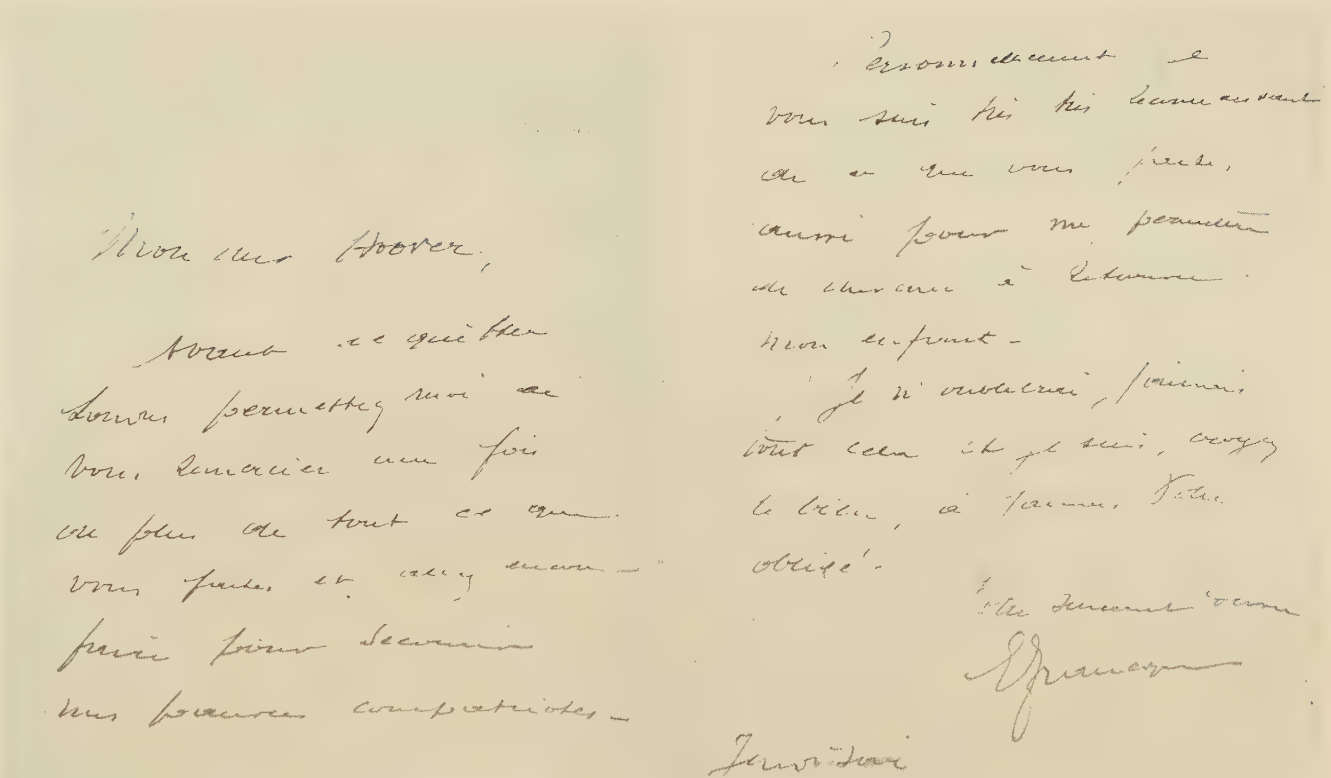
When the grain has been ground into flour, he must check up all the bills of the mills as to quantities, the understanding being that for 100 parts of grain received the mills should deliver 90 parts of flour. He has nothing to do with the payment of these bills; these latter should be sent to the C.R.B. in Brussels, with his signature on each bill, showing that he has found it to be correct, if such is the case.

In case of dispute, he should attempt to come to an understanding with the mill; should he not succeed, he must refer the settlement to the C.R.B., Brussels.

The approved bills sent to Brussels will be settled by Brussels. He should then attend to the shipping of the flour to its final destination (Arlon), and should forward to the C.R.B., Brussels, the railway receipts, or, if need be, the copy of the bills of lading.

He must notify the C.R.B. in Brussels in time, so that the latter may arrange with the authorities for the necessary freight accommodation.

10. The delegates of the C.R.B. should read up carefully the whole of the organization as set forth in the present, so as to fully understand the principles on which the note is based.



Note, 22 October 1914, Francqui to Hoover

DOCUMENT NO. 28

Letter, FRANCQUI TO HOOVER, *stating the need of a C.R.B. office in Brussels and of 20 to 25 American delegates, and discussing finances, Rockefeller Foundation visit, etc.*

BRUSSELS, 8 December 1914

MY DEAR HOOVER:

I duly received the copy of the two letters which you sent from Flushing to the Brussels office of the C.R.B.

When the plan you conceived will be carried out, I think that the organization of your offices and ours will be complete. As a matter of fact I am more and more convinced that as soon as the Brussels office of the C.R.B. has from 20 to 25 Americans at its disposal, so as to be able to send two to each province, everything will go on without a hitch.

I was glad to hear that you were able to negotiate with the Dutch Government and to obtain from them 10,000 tons of wheat. That will remove our great anxiety with regard to the provisioning of our country from the 5th to the 25th December, after which date you hope to receive regular supplies from abroad.

With reference to the financial question, I hope you have been able to persuade the Minister Berryer to place at your disposal £500,000 monthly for the purpose of renewing your floating capital. As soon as we are informed of the payments made you by the Belgian Government, we shall not fail, as agreed, to remit the countervalue in Belgian money to the Credit Communal which will distribute same to the various communes of the country. In this manner we shall obtain two results: first of all we shall be able to procure the funds necessary for future purchases, and in the second place to satisfy the needs of the poor people.

On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday I visited the country to the east of Antwerp, Brussels, Mons, accompanied by the members of the Rockefeller Foundation. These gentlemen were much impressed by what they saw and asked to be allowed to examine certain stricken districts more closely. For this purpose Mr. Rose will go to stay at Malines, Mr. Bicknell to Louvain, and Mr. James to Liège.

I think that the representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation will remain another eight days in the country, and will then return to England, where you will have an opportunity of seeing them. Then they will tell you, better than they were able to tell me, the impression made on them by their visit, and what they intend continuing to do.

I was indeed sorry not to be able to see you again before your hurried departure. I regret it all the more as I should have liked to tell you once more how very much I appreciate your endeavors and those of your fellow-countrymen to help us. All the Belgians should be eternally grateful to you.

Yours
(Signed) E. FRANCQUI

[*Translation*]

At the end of December 1914, Hoover was again in Brussels, where with his Belgian and American associates he threshed out the new administrative difficulties that had arisen. The result was a clarification of the complementary functions of the Comité National and the Commission and a reinforcement of the latter's Belgian organization.[3] Troublesome problems of administrative co-ordination arose as the burdens and obligations of the relief organization increased, but there was no fundamental change in the relationship of the co-operating bodies in Belgium until 1917, when the United States declared war and the Americans in Belgium were recalled.

DOCUMENT NO. 29

Letter, WHITLOCK TO HOOVER, *referring to the success of the reorganization, and the gratitude of the Belgian people as demonstrated on New Year's Day*

BRUSSELS, 13 January 1915

MY DEAR HOOVER:

I cannot resist the impulse to write and thank you first for the splendid work you did during your last visit here, the results of which have ever since been so marked in our work. It has all gone on smoothly and I have to thank you for the hours of quiet and days of peace that have resulted from your labors. May the gods reward you.

And then I wish to thank you for sending Captain Lucey here. He is a remarkable man. He directs the whole organization now with the ease that a corporal manoeuvers his squad, though the comparison is not at all favorable to him since he is a sort of Field Marshal. I have grown to have not only an unbounded admiration but a sincere affection for him. He is pure gold all the way through, and the day God made him, He must have been in a good mood and had plenty of material at hand.

I am sorry you were not here on that New Year's Day for something very beautiful occurred. Spontaneously, quietly, all day long, a stream of Belgians poured into the Legation leaving cards and signing names in a little book that Baron Lambert provided. Over three thousand in all, to express their thanks for what America has done, all sorts and conditions of men, from noblemen whose cards bore high titles, down to the poorest woman from the slums, who had carefully written her name on a bit of pasteboard, the edges of which still showed the traces of the scissors. It was very touch-

[3] Hoover brought Lucey from Rotterdam to Brussels where, as Director of the Commission in Belgium, he put through the reorganization of the Brussels office. When Lucey returned to the United States at the end of January 1915, A. N. Connett succeeded him in the directorship.

ing, very moving, and I want you to know of it, for you have done so much more than any of us to help them.

Nobody need tell me any more that self-interest is the great power that moves men, or that there is no gratitude in the world. Surely in this wonderful work, this best of human qualities has brilliantly shone forth.

Will you make my compliments to Mrs. Hoover and believe me,

Your ever devoted friend

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

DOCUMENT NO. 30

Letter, A. N. CONNETT TO AMERICAN DELEGATES IN BELGIUM, *instructing them as to their functions in the distribution of relief supplies*

BRUSSELS, 5 February 1915

To the Provincial Delegates in Belgium

GENTLEMEN:

In order to clear up certain points, the following instructions, prepared by the undersigned, have been submitted to the Comité Exécutif of the Comité National, and approved by it, as well as by our Minister, Brand Whitlock.

1. It has been proved that the abandonment of the use of the American flag has had disadvantageous results for the operations of the C.R.B. In consequence the flag may henceforth be fixed on all warehouses containing supplies imported by the C.R.B. The automobiles belonging to the C.R.B., or hired by it, can carry the flag on the condition of its removal when the machine no longer is in the service of the C.R.B. Thus, for example, when in the service of the Comité National, or on a pleasure trip, or on any other use not related to the work of the C.R.B., the American flag may not be used.

2. The local delegates should make sure that the supplies are distributed equally in the whole of their province. For this reason, these delegates should be authorized to make investigations of the methods adopted by the provincial, regional, or communal committees. When difficulties are encountered from the point of view of the distribution, or when abuses are proved, the delegate in question is requested to examine the facts, in agreement with the provincial committee, and to order, in accord with that committee, the measures to be taken to overcome the said difficulties or remedy the abuses. In case an agreement cannot be reached, the provincial delegate should refer the matter to the Central Office at Brussels, which, with the Comité National, will decide in the last analysis. The delegates should do everything to avoid such an appeal, but they cannot in any case accept deviations from our general principle that the distribution is for all without favor to anyone, whether in the distribution of food or of *secours.* The competent delegate is invited and should assist at the meetings of the provincial delegates.

3. The delegates are earnestly requested not to uselessly increase the difficult and often ungrateful task of those who are charged with the distribution. If it should happen that the explanations they ask, in consequence of the right which permits them to control certain operations, are not furnished, it would seem that within the limits of their powers it would be easy for the delegates to demonstrate that this control constitutes an absolute obligation for them, by virtue of the conventions concluded between the interested Powers, who have granted the authorization for the importation of food. In addition, a moral obligation rests upon us from the fact that a part of the resources is derived from gifts; consequently we are in a measure the empowered representatives of the donors. When the time comes for a definite settlement of accounts, the C.R.B. will be held responsible by the generous donors for every kilo of food and for every dollar distributed.

4. The delegates are requested not to affix their signature either on proclamations or on posters; such publications should come from the official committee and should be signed by the head of that committee. However, a full agreement between the delegate and the committee should precede any publication of documents relating to all matters such as those referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3, within the jurisdiction of the competent delegates.

In conclusion, the delegates should easily see from the present instructions that their rôle is that of an adviser and not of an administrator. They can and ought to protest against every measure contrary to the arrangements made by the C.R.B. They have full powers of investigation of the methods adopted and the means chosen to apply them.

I am convinced that it is unnecessary to add that, while they should fulfil their functions with all firmness, they ought also to show themselves tolerant and courteous in their attitude toward our collaborators who are occupied in an arduous task.

Truly yours

A. N. Connett
Director, Brussels Office

P.S.—The Comité National has forwarded to its delegates, for their governance, a translation of the present letter.

3. *The C.R.B. and the German General Government. February–March 1915*

In the first four months of relief work the Germans had been extremely liberal in granting passes and allowing general freedom of movement of Americans. As the work of the Commission grew in volume and importance the attitude of the Governor-General became less accommodating. The change was due in part to the fear that this neutral body was becoming too powerful in territory where, theoretically

at least, German rule was absolute, and in part to disapproval of the enthusiasm with which the Belgian people greeted the Americans wherever they went on their tours of inspection. Whatever the cause, the German tendency to deny the Americans reasonable freedom of movement raised a serious issue, for without that freedom, the Commission could not discharge its responsibility of guaranteeing the proper distribution of relief.

Though the Imperial German Foreign Office, in December 1914, had given Ambassador Gerard the assurance that all passports required by the representatives of the Commission in Belgium would be issued, the passport authorities in Belgium, early in 1915, were very clearly violating the spirit of this understanding. The delays, which sometimes ran to weeks, had the effect of greatly curtailing the effectiveness of the American service. The Germans were no more moved by knowledge of this than by the complaints of the Commission's representatives.

When he was in Berlin in early February 1915[4] Hoover made special representation to the Imperial Government and received assurance that all necessary passports would be granted immediately upon application made by the Commission and endorsed by the American Minister. Notwithstanding this, upon his return through Brussels about the 10th February, Hoover found the attitude of the General Government more disquieting than ever.

DOCUMENT NO. 31

Letter, HOOVER TO GOVERNOR-GENERAL VON BISSING,[5] *urging the necessity of greater freedom of movement for C.R.B. delegates in order to forestall military suspicion and opposition to the relief*

BRUSSELS, 12 February 1915

To His Excellency, Baron von Bissing
Governor-General in Belgium, Brussels

EXCELLENCY:

In the representations which I made to Your Excellency last evening with regard to giving a larger measure of freedom of movement to the men engaged in the work of alimentation and more

[4] See chapter iv.

[5] Von Bissing had succeeded von der Goltz as Governor-General in Belgium on the 3d December 1914.

expedition and liberality in the issuing of passes, and Your Excellency's reply which I took to mean that Your Excellency felt that our people have already too much freedom of movement, I am afraid that I did not lay sufficient emphasis on the important phase of this work and the gravity of the situation which arises.

If Your Excellency will recollect when this work was initiated the English Government strongly objected to the introduction of foodstuffs into Belgium from neutral states, on the ground that it was relieving the Germans from the duty of themselves feeding the Belgians, as the Germans would themselves have to deplete their own stores of foodstuffs to prevent the Belgians from starving; that, therefore, this service was a great military advantage to the Germans and a great military disadvantage to the English.

It was only on the strongest pressure that the American Ambassador in London and the American Minister in Brussels were able to secure the assent of the English Government to their proposal, and it was only on condition that these gentlemen, with the approval of the American Government, guarantee the undertaking of the German Government that these foodstuffs should reach the civil population only; moreover, the English Government finally consented on the stipulation that such machinery be set up in the shape of an organization as would satisfactorily demonstrate that these guarantees would be carried out.

It was for this primary reason that "The Commission for Relief in Belgium" was founded and that a number of American volunteers were recruited to undertake the work. It was stipulated that in order to carry out the work without any question of doubt as to the ultimate destination of the foodstuffs, this transportation and delivery should be under the members of this Commission.

It was also found that in order to secure the equitable distribution of the food throughout Belgium the members of the Commission had to take certain administrative duties but in any event the primary *raison d'être* lies in the guarantees which were given the English Government.

Time and again misrepresentations have been made to the English Government by ill-willed persons (and even in America) as to the attitude of the German officials in Belgium and it has only been by the explanation of the detailed supervision of our members and the completeness of our records, which show the destination of every sack of wheat which comes into Belgium, that we were able to keep open the road of these foodstuffs through the British fleet, and Your Excellency can scarcely realize the slenderness of the thread of sentiment which enables us to keep this stream of foodstuffs flowing into Belgium.

The constant assurances of the American Minister in Brussels based upon personal assurances of the various delegates and their accords, have been necessary and thus far sufficient to allay the various movements antagonistic to the continuation of this work.

We have now been engaged upon this work for nearly four months; there have been issued at one time or another a good many passes to the people engaged in this work, and I do not think that Your Excellency could point to a single instance where these passes

when issued to bona fide representatives have been misused or that a single criticism can be made as to the scrupulous care with which all our relations have been carried out.

In order to obtain the character of men whose devotion to humanitarian efforts is such that they can be depended upon from every point of view we have had to operate the whole of this work with volunteers because we could not secure for a monetary payment men of the character of those now engaged in this labor. I therefore put it up to Your Excellency that this body of men are worthy of the fullest confidence and that they are gentlemen who would scorn the imputation of espionage or other improper conduct on their part. Dependent as we are on volunteers there is necessarily more recruiting and departure of new men than would be necessary in a commercial organization.

Inasmuch as the whole body of men engaged upon the arduous labor of handling 90,000,000 kilos of foodstuffs per month are volunteers, it is hopeless for me to induce these men to remain or to secure new men if they are to be made subject to the whims of every local "Kommandantur"; and on the other hand we cannot take the responsibility of the necessary assurances to the American public who subscribe so generously, and to other interested governments, unless we have men of this character and unless we are able to carry on our daily work of supervision, inspection, and accounts with the necessary freedom of movement.

Although I feel deeply the responsibility, I am compelled to assure Your Excellency that unless we can establish a basis of confidential and friendly relations and trust from the German authorities, we shall be compelled to withdraw and the flow of the stream of foodstuffs into Belgium from outside countries must necessarily cease.

We feel that while our service is personally beneficial to the Belgian civil population it is nevertheless of the utmost importance to the Germans from every point of view.

I do not wish to ask for anything which cannot be properly given under the circumstances, but it does seem to me that it would be possible and entirely reasonable to detail some member of the German pass bureau, who could devote himself to our necessities, and who should have instructions to treat our applications on a very liberal and expeditious basis; that passes should be issued to certain members of our inspection staff to move throughout the occupation zone, to others to move freely through the special provinces where they are assigned and to go to and from Brussels; and to others, transportation service to move freely over the Holland frontier. In the manner which I described last night by which the American Minister should himself approve every application for passes, we should have given further assurances to Your Excellency of the character of the men whom we have associated with us.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the expression of my high consideration.

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 32

Letter, VON BISSING TO HEINEMAN (FOR HOOVER), *stating the regulations and limitations laid down for the American delegates*

BRUSSELS, 20 February 1915

DEAR MR. HEINEMAN:

I am sorry that I am unable to reply directly to Mr. Hoover's letter of February 13, as he is now in London.

I therefore address my answer to you with the request that you inform Mr. Hoover of its contents.

In the first place I desire to emphasize that I also share your opinion that, in view of the great importance and difficulty of the undertaking originated by you, there is need of a "firm basis of confidence, of friendly and confidential co-operation between the German authorities and yourself."

This confidence I am conscious of having fully shown you hitherto in every respect, and I gladly take the opportunity to assure you that in the future also I shall gladly support you, in your beneficent and humanitarian endeavors. I shall do this as far as possible and especially as far as it accords with the principle, which I consider irrefutable, that I shall continue to hold in my own hands the control in all branches of the administration of the country entrusted to me.

After having now heard the report of the gentlemen entrusted by me to confer with you and to learn your wishes, I submit to you herewith the decisions which I have reached:

In accordance with the fact mutually agreed to in yesterday's conferences, that in all respects the organization of the undertaking had, from the beginning and now has, as its object the establishment of a storehouse in each province under the control of the American Commission with the Belgian Comité National as the distributing agency within the provinces (seven governments besides Ghent), I desire:

1. That henceforth there shall be no alteration in this fundamental arrangement.

2. I desire further:

a) That the number of gentlemen in the active service of both Commissions (Belgian and American) be restricted as much as possible.

b) That the frequent changes in the personnel, which cannot be of advantage to the undertaking in view of its importance and difficulty, be discontinued as far as feasible.

c) That only in quite special exceptional cases "donors" be admitted.

All these are requests which you yourself, I was glad to note, admit and whose fulfilment you had distinctly in mind as in harmony with our own wishes.

3. Strict adherence must be kept to the agreement that the gentlemen traveling to Holland shall pass the frontier exclusively at Putte, and also that they communicate their presence (in accord-

ance with already established custom, as you declared) to the German authorities (governors, chiefs of the districts, local commanders).

4. I have noted in accord with your information, that the necessary pneumatic tires and benzine are provided by yourself.

5. I have furthermore noted that at the present time for the Commission for Relief there are:

a) About 30 to 35 gentlemen in the provinces who travel thence to Brussels.

b) About 4 gentlemen stationed in Brussels who desire to make inspection trips to all provinces (for which latter G.G. passes would be required).

c) About 5 or 6 gentlemen traveling between Holland and Belgium, and that this number (totalling about 45), will be reduced to a total of about 25 after April 15.

And that for the Comité National

d) About 4 Belgian gentlemen wish to travel on inspection trips to the whole territory of the General Government, for whom also 4 G.G. passes would be required.

e) And about 10 gentlemen from Brussels for inspection trips to individual provinces.

f) For the gentlemen stationed in the provinces engaged in distributing supplies passes will be assigned by the governors, as explained to you.

Taking as a basis the foregoing numbers stated by you, I will consent to the following:

(1) That in accordance with your wishes the American Minister Mr. Whitlock shall propose for passes those gentlemen desired by him for whose trustworthiness he thereby assumes the responsibility.

That the official or officer ordered from here to the office of the Commission shall hand over these proposals to Section II d. of the General Government.

And that this section permit the issuance of the desired passes by the Passzentrale.

(2) I shall furthermore give the assurance that there shall be no bodily searching of the gentlemen journeying to and from Holland unless in well-founded cases of suspicion such a searching shall be ordered by the General Government itself.

(3) For yourself and Mr. Connett I shall when requested each time, deliver G.G. passes for railway journeys to Ghent, and for the four gentlemen of your Commission stationed in Brussels, as well as the four members of the Executive Committee of the Belgian Comité, similar passes for their inspection trips from Brussels to the provinces.

(4) Your wishes regarding passes for additional passengers will be met as far as possible.

With deep consideration, I am very truly yours

(Signed) Freiherr von Bissing
Generaloberst

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 33

Letter, HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, *telling of the rumors in England of misuse of relief supplies by Germans, the insistence of the British Government on C.R.B. responsibility for distribution, and the need of more delegates*

LONDON, 6 March 1915

His Excellency Brand Whitlock
Brussels

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

I have had a severe drilling this week from the English Government with regard to our whole organization in Belgium. As you can imagine from the international disputes which have been going on with regard to provisioning the civil population, as distinguished from the military population, it seems to have occurred to the English Government to have an investigation as to whether or no we were carrying out our guarantees, and they seem to have made some considerable inquiry in Belgium. The constant lying reports which appear in the English press with regard to our foodstuffs being taken by the Germans or devoted to their requisitions in the operation zone, seem to have combined to put in their minds a great deal of suspicion. In the first instance they wanted to know how many people we had in Belgium superintending this distribution and pointed out that under the later agreement this Commission was, itself, entirely responsible for the distribution and they were not prepared to accept the Comité National or any other organization than this as the responsible controllers. I told them we had about fifty Americans at work, and they were not satisfied that this was an adequate number to control so large a concern. They also pointed out to me that they had made inquiries with regard to Messrs. Heineman and Hulse, who occupy prominent positions in our Belgian organization, and that, while they were prepared to accept our assurance that these gentlemen were Americans and entirely neutral and desirous only of serving the Belgians, nevertheless they had been many years employed by and associated with prominent German concerns and they were not prepared to consent to their having the direction of the distribution in Belgium. I assured them that the direction was in the hands of Mr. Connett, as to whose standing I produced credentials. I assured them that we kept accurate accounts and statistics by which we can show the destination of all of these foodstuffs, and they have asked for particulars in the form of a monthly report. Altogether, I view with a great deal of alarm the situation from the English point of view, as the military party here is gaining ascendancy daily and we cannot afford to allow any lapse in our administration and responsibility upon which they can hang complaints. I am assured that if the knowledge came to them that our staff had been limited to twenty-five members they would at once say that this is absolutely inadequate and they are not satisfied that we are physically able to execute our guarantees. Knowing as I do, the ability and devotion

of Messrs. Heineman and Hulse I have obviously made as strong a case as I am capable of. Nevertheless, I am afraid that, in order to serve the Belgian people to the best end, it may be necessary for these gentlemen to show some self-denial in the prominence of their positions.

We, of course, worry on from day to day as best we can, but I think you should be advised of this rather acute situation and I am positive that the return home of a considerable number of our staff without their places being filled, will precipitate the situation, which may be positively disastrous.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 34

Telegram, HOOVER TO GERARD, *concerning the extension of relief to Northern France, the need of more American delegates, and advising the Ambassador to approach the German Government for necessary permission*

LONDON, 9 March 1915

Relief Commission, Rotterdam

Please send following telegram to Mr. Gerard, Berlin:

Am able to secure subscription considerable sums of money from charitable institutions for feeding French people south of Belgian frontier. In order, however, to secure this money it is necessary for me to create a special department Commission for Relief in Belgium in co-operation with National Committee in Brussels in order that foodstuffs and funds may be handled and accounted for properly. It is also necessary that we should have undertaking from German Government that these foodstuffs will not be interfered with in any manner and that we shall be allowed to place in this territory at least five American members of Commission and shall have right to move about in full superintendence of the work of distribution. I am not allowed to proceed with shipments until I have these guarantees in hand, and as the matter is one of urgent humanitarian interest I trust that you will again lend us your kindly services and that the German Government will meet us in a liberal and prompt manner. We have been notified by Governor-General, Brussels, to reduce our staff in Belgium to twenty-five members by early April and that passes to these gentlemen will only be issued under great restrictions and apparently through the intermediary of Mr. Heineman. We are entirely discouraged by this attitude of local authorities. Do not believe that it can be in line with intention German Government toward us and trust you will take it up with them. Fundamental fact is that in order for us to give proper executive control to distribution of this foodstuff, to properly account to its

donors, and above all to give credibility to our assurances to the Allied Governments as to their guarantees, it is absolutely necessary for us to have the right to at least fifty people, to put any such number of staff into Belgium as may be reasonable to meet our own emergencies. Their passes must be issued directly on certificate of Mr. Whitlock and on liberal basis of movement. After four months the Germans cannot point to one single instance of lack of extreme care on the part of this Commission in maintaining an absolutely neutral and honest attitude toward them. The men who have volunteered for this humanitarian service are not engaged in espionage or similar transactions.

Wish you would take the first opportunity of communicating text of this telegram by messenger to Connett, Whitlock.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 35

Letter, HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, *referring to von Bissing's annoyance over preceding telegram and stressing the delicate situation in England caused by the Governor-General's restrictions on C.R.B. delegates*

LONDON, 18 March 1915

His Excellency Brand Whitlock
Brussels

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

On receipt of his Excellency General von Bissing's letter requesting us to reduce our staff of supervisors in Belgium considerably, I telegraphed openly to Ambassador Gerard in Berlin, asking him if he would interest himself in obtaining an amelioration of this condition.

I understand now that this action of mine has created some feeling, either with His Excellency or with His Excellency's staff, that I was endeavoring to go over their heads in this matter.

You will of course recollect that any important phase in this work must be communicated to all the American Ambassadors concerned, as they have the grave responsibility of the guarantees.

This, however, is aside from the point, which is that upon the Government here having obtained knowledge of this limitation, I had a perfect storm about my ears, on the question as to whether or not we are in a position to execute the necessary guarantees which this Government insists on as a condition for allowing these foodstuffs into Belgium, and this matter has been called to Ambassador Page's attention. It is probably impossible for me to make clear to you and the gentlemen in Brussels by what a delicate balance this whole business continues, in view of the complete conviction of the English military authorities that the whole of this effort is to their disadvantage and is profoundly to the advantage of the Germans. My action of telegraphing to Mr. Gerard in this matter

thus was to satisfy them here that we were doing everything possible to allay the storm that they had created, and I trust that in doing so I sufficiently satisfied the authorities here, so that we may have again escaped being closed down upon from this end. As you are fully aware, it is our one desire to so conduct this business that it shall have the absolute confidence of both sides, and seeing the very natural antagonism which exists between them, it becomes a mighty difficult job. Our German friends do not always realize how easy it is to plunge us into difficulties with the English—and vice versa.

In addition to such difficulties as to the above, you may appreciate something of what is going on here when I tell you that we are at present £1,400,000 in debt, and the failure to so far reach any basis of finance with the German authorities which can be carried out is itself sufficiently worrying. Not that I object to taking this personal liability on myself, but if I cannot meet it, it simply means that the food supply in Belgium will cease.

I trust that if His Excellency the Governor has been offended with regard to my action, you will interest yourself in giving to him the above explanation and will perhaps endeavor to impress upon him the almost indescribable difficulties which we encounter in this work.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover

4. *The German Authorities and Relief Control. June–July 1915*

The controversy over the freedom of action of the Commission's representatives proved to be the first phase in a much more vital conflict affecting the whole matter of control of relief. The rapid expansion of the relief organization in scope and importance, which the occupation authorities had not anticipated, convinced them that German interests and position in Belgium required a limitation of and greater official participation in relief measures. General von Bissing, thereupon, issued instructions which, in effect, would place the distribution of relief through the C.N. under German control. This policy, Hoover, the Belgians, the patron ministers, and finally the British Government energetically opposed, for it threatened the very foundation of relief since it undermined the position of the Commission as the guarantor for the equitable and exclusive use of relief supplies for Belgian civilians.

DOCUMENT NO. 36

Letter, VON BISSING TO WHITLOCK, *objecting to extension of activities of C.N., particularly the help given to the unemployed*

BRUSSELS, 26 June 1915

To His Excellency, Mr. Brand Whitlock
Minister of the United States of America in Brussels

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have the honor to bring to your knowledge some measures which I have believed it my duty to take concerning the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The protection and favors which I have never ceased to grant to this institution are proof of the interest I bear this Comité and its benevolent activity in favor of the Belgian population.

It has nevertheless become clear that the sphere of the Comité's activity has assumed an extension which had not been foreseen at the time of its creation. Consequently I have considered it necessary that the activity of the Comité be clearly delimited and that the mutual relations of the administration under my orders and of the sub-organizations of the Comité be regulated in such a way as to avoid the friction which necessarily was hindering the labors of the said Comité.

For this reason and also that a deeper knowledge of the method of working of the Comité may permit the authorities of the country to facilitate the Comité's work while at the same time preventing transgressions of the eventual powers of the sub-organization, I have issued instructions to the governors under my orders, the substance of which I have the honor to communicate hereinafter to Your Excellency:

The authorities in the provinces shall have as their duty to keep themselves informed of the activity of the numerous sub-organizations of the Comité National in their district. The presidents of the Civil Administration of the provinces shall endeavor to maintain a permanent contact with the directors of the committees in their chief towns. This contact would be established in the most useful way if the presidents were present at the regular meetings of these committees, as has moreover been the case for some months in the province of Hainaut. It is desirable that the German civil commissioners attached to the district commanders act in similar manner *vis-à-vis* the regional committees of their districts.

The censorship of the correspondence of the committees shall henceforth be exercised by the civil authorities (German civil presidents and commissioners) instead of and in lieu of the military authorities who have exercised it hitherto.

The committees will not be allowed to give instructions direct to the communes; they will not be permitted to make inquiries, to send interrogatory lists or circulars to the communes, nor have the latter make out any lists or statistics without first having consulted the president or the German civil commissioner. The committees may

not make any rules or regulations with the communes in their favour. All measures of this kind must be proposed to the competent president or commissioner.

Since every restraint upon personal liberty or liberty of commerce is forbidden, it is necessary that no verbal or written threat pronounced or executed, against any person or any commune be permitted, whether to stop the supply of food, or to exact for this food a higher price, or to refuse relief.

As a general rule the committees should be forbidden to make use of any pressure of whatsoever sort to force communes or individuals to obey instructions. All measures to be taken against these latter should be proposed by the committee to competent authorities, who shall give to such measures whatever sequence they shall judge wise.

The monthly statements of the forecasts of receipts and expenditures established by the provincial committees must be communicated to the presidents of the German Civil Administration. The latter will thus be enabled to remain constantly informed regarding the movement of the funds of these committees.

In addition to the general rules enumerated above I have also given the following instructions for a certain number of individual cases:

Concerning the relief to be granted to those out of work the presidents shall take care that the latter do not hinder the resumption of work by the laboring population. Moreover relief cannot be given to workmen who refuse remunerative labor.

Since I myself have instituted estimates of the damages caused by the war, no inquiry of the Comité on this subject, as well as on the subject of the requisitions of the German troops, can be authorized.

Since the Comité has obtained from the communes the grant of police powers to its inspectors *vis-à-vis* the millers, bakers, etc., and since the communes have subscribed to the obligation to have the sanctions exacted by the inspectors carried out, all measures of this kind must be revoked since the administration under my orders is alone qualified to exact these measures. The supervisors of the Comité or of the Commission for Relief in Belgium have the right to make inquiries and statements regarding the abuses committed by the millers, bakers, etc., but their right is limited to making these statements. They are allowed to communicate these afterwards to the competent authorities with request to give to the statements such sequence as these may require.

No measures of coercion exercised *vis-à-vis* the communes or individuals for the obtaining of funds destined to constitute a floating capital or for any other use can be authorized.

The presidents of the Civil Administration shall come to an understanding with the directors of the committees in order to reduce as much as possible the price of food products.

Every tendency on the part of the Comité to monopolize the distribution of relief in Belgium must be forbidden.

The principle must be maintained that all other organizations of benevolence, above all the Belgian Red Cross, have the right to perform their functions adjacent to and independent of the Comité.

I have no doubt that these measures taken by myself are in conformity with the intentions of Your Excellency. I have all the less reason to doubt this, because I have always had at heart to respect scrupulously the arrangements concluded with the government represented by Your Excellency, regarding the alimentation of the Belgian population. Your Excellency will have taken into cognizance the fact that all the measures outlined have as sole purpose the maintenance of rights which belong to the occupant of the country in conformity to international conventions.

I flatter myself with the hope that Your Excellency will share my conviction that the line of conduct thus traced for my administration will serve to guarantee a common and useful work, founded on mutual confidence, for the welfare of the Belgian population.

I beg Your Excellency to be so kind as to communicate the preceding to the Comité National, and I take this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my high esteem.

(Signed) Freiherr von Bissing
Generaloberst

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 37

Letter, Hoover to Page, *regarding the issue raised by the Germans: the paying of railway men to maintain a state of strike and attempts to use the C.R.B. as channel of payment to support workers refusing employment to embarrassment of the Germans*

London, 5 July 1915

His Excellency, The Hon. Walter Page,
American Ambassador, London

Dear Mr. Page:

There are two or three matters revolving around this Commission at the present moment which fill us with the greatest anxiety, and I therefore wish to formulate and lay them before you for your advice and consideration.

1. Upon my arrival in Belgium on the 9th June I learned that an investigation by the German military authorities was in progress as regards the Comité National and, in effect, into our own organization in Belgium. This investigation appears to have arisen over a device for relief which had been adopted by the Comité National some few weeks previously, by which they undertook to make payments to unemployed workmen on the lines of some old Belgian law on the subject. The German military authorities gained a suspicion that these payments were of political import in producing strike conditions against public and other services in the country. My own impression of them is that this method of relief was

socially wrongly founded as it was in effect giving money as a right to the unemployed rather than giving actual food as an emergency support pending employment. It appeared that the particular relief scheme had not met the approval of the whole Comité National but had been more or less imposed by the members of the socialistic and syndicalist tendencies as representing their section of the community. The Commission for Relief had but little difficulty in showing that they had no connection with this affair in any of its political phases. The ground of German suspicions, however, appears to revolve on certain facts which you will recollect I have laid before you from time to time, in that the Belgian military authorities had smuggled monies into Belgium with which to pay railway workmen and others to maintain a state of strike, and that this form of relief given by the Comité National more or less effected the same result.

You will also recollect that a great deal of pressure was placed upon us from time to time from December until April, often when we were hard up for money, to induce us to accept large remittances to be made to Belgium through our exchange department, these remittances to be for distribution to these railway employees; and you will recollect that not only did we refuse to have any association with this scheme or accept money for such purposes, but also that we vigorously protested against the whole act, both as to smuggling the money in, or any other feature of it, as being one which would sooner or later precipitate upon the Belgian people rigorous military action. In any case, these events have called the whole future of the Comité National into question, and as the result of this investigation a letter has been addressed to the Comité National by General von Bissing, copy of which I enclose. We are fearful that this letter may be followed by stipulations which will bring us into direct conflict with the undertakings given by the Allied Governments. The general limitations placed by these Governments on imports have the following intrinsic effects:

a) This Commission, as an institution, guarantees that foodstuffs imported shall reach the civil population only.

b) The limitations placed upon the amount of imported foodstuffs are based on a ration of 250 grams of flour per diem per capita and certain other sundry commodities in supplement thereto.

It appears to us that a consequential obligation in this matter is to see that this foodstuff is distributed equitably over the entire population and in general, that there shall be no interference by the German military authorities with the distribution of the food. It also appears to us that, as a humanitarian body, we should insist that rich and poor should be treated alike, and the constrainment of our finance is a further limitation placed on the amount of foodstuffs available. It is therefore necessary to enforce some kind of restriction on consumption as the above imports amount to only about one-third of the normal consumption. Hitherto we have done this entirely by indirection, in the limitation of the amount of the food in a given commune and the stipulation with bakers and other distributing agencies that this maximum shall be tendered to each person whom they are authorized to serve. Our only power

of enforcement has been to cut off the supply to any given distributing agency which did not faithfully carry out these arrangements. You will see that General von Bissing's letter cuts straight across these arrangements.

2. The German military authorities in Northern France and Belgium have shown considerable evidence of wanting to use the food supply which we furnish to the people as a weapon to force them into labor on behalf of the German army. You will recollect that it is a fundamental to the agreement with the Allied Governments, that the food shall be distributed without interference. Moreover, it appears to us that this action on their part is a violation of the Hague Convention and is, in effect, using us, a neutral body, for unneutral purposes. We can only retort by cutting off the food supply or food supplies to large sections; but this, in turn, puts us up as censors and regulators of the acts of the German Army, and in any event it is the innocent population who suffer. Such a positive act on their part has taken place at Roubaix, and Mr. Crosby has suspended the whole shipment to the province, a little in the hope that the military authorities will be brought to a recognition of the fact that we cannot be used in this manner. In view of the event at Roubaix, we have addressed the enclosed letter to the French Embassy, asking them for their instructions, and it also appears to us that the letter of General von Bissing which I refer to above, has running through it a desire on the part of the German military authorities, by interference with the food distribution, to direct it as a weapon to compel the population to labor. If this labor were entirely of non-military value it would be an admirable social improvement. I enclose herewith a memorandum which I have handed to the Foreign Office, as the result of conferences with them, on the general question of imports and exports from Belgium, as bearing on the stimulation of non-contraband industry.

3. The whole nature of the acts set out above fills our minds with some forbodings. These things have not yet come to a positive and final issue. If they cannot be straightened out by negotiation within ourselves, it appears to me that the greatest catastrophe which could happen may ensue, i.e., that this work may break down on points of minor issue between the belligerent Powers; and if such an event becomes imminent I should be glad if you could consider whether it would be feasible, in view of the importance of this work, that the whole of the Ambassadors who comprise our Honorary Chairmen should have a meeting in Holland, at which attendance could be had from both the German and English Governments, with a view to placing the work of this Commission on a definite and feasible basis.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 38

Letter, GREY TO PAGE, *objecting to German efforts to control relief and restating the British Government's conditions under which relief is to be permitted*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
17 July 1915

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

I am much obliged for Your Excellency's letter of the 13th instant, enclosing a copy of General von Bissing's letter of June 26th to the patrons of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation at Brussels, together with a copy of Mr. Whitlock's reply thereto.

Since this correspondence took place, Your Excellency has been good enough to transmit a copy of my letter of July 7th to Mr. Whitlock, who will therefore now be fully acquainted with the views of His Majesty's Government, and will be in a position to explain that spirit of non-interference in which His Majesty's Government intend to act, and in which they intend to insist that the German authorities shall also act, towards the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National in all matters which fall within the functions of those bodies. It is on this spirit, and not on the strict belligerent rights of either government, that the whole work of relief is based, and the introduction into these discussions of any such claims of right cannot but be fatal to the continuance of that work. It will be clear to Your Excellency and to Mr. Whitlock how far General Bissing's letter is in accord with this spirit.

I do not intend to enter into a discussion of the various technical points of administration raised by General von Bissing. It is enough to say that the decision on these points must be governed, in general, by the spirit I have mentioned, and that the decision on each particular point must be in accord with the various definite conditions which I have laid down in correspondence with Your Excellency and with the Commission from time to time since the work of the Commission began. These definite conditions represent the absolute minimum on which His Majesty's Government can allow that work to continue. In order that there may be no misunderstanding as to the nature of these stipulations I here recapitulate them, and I must ask that the Commission and the Comité National shall enter into no discussions regarding the limits or methods of their work except upon the basis of these fundamental undertakings:

1. The Commission guarantees that the foodstuffs imported shall be consumed solely by the Belgian civil population.

2. No foodstuffs shall be imported which will, in effect, replace any foodstuffs requisitioned or purchased in Belgium by the German authorities.

3. Such commodities as may be acquired by the Commission for shipment into Belgium are to be consigned to the Commission for Relief in Belgium at their warehouses in Belgium and shall remain in the sole charge, and under complete control, of the Commission or its agents until issued to the Sub-committees of the Comité National in Belgium. These Sub-committees shall in their turn enter into sole charge and control of these commodities.

4. The only commodities imported into Belgium by the Commission shall be wheat and wheat flour, peas, beans, rice, bacon, lard, and maize for human consumption. Medical supplies destined and used solely for the civil population may also be imported as in the past, under the same guarantees.

5. The quantity of wheat and wheat flour imported shall not exceed sixty thousand metric tons per month and shall after the present harvest be reduced to such a monthly amount as will supplement the yield of the harvest during the period of its distribution.

6. The quantities of the commodities to be imported other than wheat and wheat flour shall be fixed from time to time in agreement with His Majesty's Government.

7. The whole yield of the present harvest of breadstuffs in Belgium shall be acquired by the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National, and shall be held, controlled, and distributed by them alone, precisely in the same manner and under the same guarantees as the imported foodstuffs.

8. It is the duty of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to satisfy itself that all foodstuffs imported or acquired as above shall be distributed by itself and the Comité National with justice and equality over the entire civil population, and there shall be no interference of any kind whatever by the German authorities either in the sale of these foodstuffs or in their free distribution in the way of relief to those whom the Commission and the Comité National shall consider deserving of such relief.

9. The Commission for Relief in Belgium shall be maintained in its organisation and functions so long as these imports continue and shall remain under the patronage of Your Excellency and the Spanish Ambassador. The actual executive work of the Commission shall continue to be presided over by a responsible Chairman and Directors, and these officials together with all the members of the Commission shall be of neutral nationality and their selection shall in each case be approved either by Your Excellency or by the Spanish Ambassador as Patrons, or by both. The Commission shall maintain in Belgium a sufficient staff and have sufficient freedom of movement to enable them at all times to satisfy themselves that all the above conditions are maintained.

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 39

Letter, WHITLOCK TO PAGE, *reporting German agreement to the British conditions and referring to difficulties connected with negotiations concerning the new harvest*

BRUSSELS, 19 July 1915

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE:

My colleague, the Spanish Minister, and I have had two long conversations with Baron von der Lancken in reference to the note of His Britannic Majesty's Government which you sent to me the

other day, in which are set forth the conditions under which the British Government will consent to the continuance of the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National in feeding the civil population in Belgium.

I am pleased to be able to inform you that we are now able to say that the German authorities accept the principles laid down in the note, and that the work of the Commission will therefore go on under the conditions set forth. This declaration was formally and officially made at the conclusion this afternoon of our second long conference and will be produced in writing immediately and signed by the Governor-General. Upon the receipt of the note, which will be in a day or so, I shall promptly forward it to you; but I wish to apprise you promptly of this fortunate conclusion of our negotiations in order that there may be no misunderstanding or possible interruption of the work of ravitaillement.

It would be difficult to give you an idea of all the difficulties of the hard job, and of the amount of trouble we have had during the last month with all these new negotiations over the new harvest.

I am ninety-five years older than I was, and I wish I were on an uninhabited island up in the Georgian Bay!

I am, my dear colleague,

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

DOCUMENT NO. 40

Letter, BARON VON DER LANCKEN[6] TO WHITLOCK, *giving formal undertaking of the Germans to agree to British conditions*

BRUSSELS, 29 July 1915

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have had the honor of receiving the letter which Your Excellency was pleased to transmit to me under date of July 16, 1915[7] concerning the revictualing of Belgium by the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

I was happy to learn that, as a result of the measures which Your Excellency, as well as His Excellency the Minister of Spain had been so kind as to undertake, the British Government has pledged itself to facilitate until the harvest of 1916 the importation into Belgium of the products necessary for the feeding of the Belgian civil population within the conditions upon the principle of which I have already had the pleasure of placing myself in accord with Your Excellency.

[6] Baron von der Lancken as head of the Political Department for the Governor-General addressed a similar letter to the Marquis de Villalobar, Spanish Minister in Brussels.

[7] Chapter viii, Document 344.

I have already had the occasion to make known to Your Excellency that the Governor-General has declared himself agreed in principle that the work of revictualing of Belgium continue exactly, for the benefit of the population of that country, under the conditions which were formulated through the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the representatives of the neutral Powers.

As to the details of these agreements I am glad to be able to inform Your Excellency that the Governor-General admits the following principles, which, I am sure, are the same as those admitted by Your Excellency, to wit:

That the feeding and support of the Belgian civil population must continue to be separated from the feeding and support of the German Army, and that the decisions made in this sense by the Governor-General in accord with the protecting ministers [MM. les Protecteurs] shall be carried out in all respects.

That the Belgian population alone shall derive benefit from the aid which is distributed by the Comité National.

That the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall be able to enjoy all liberty of action necessary for them to be in a position to fulfil the mission which has devolved upon them through the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the representatives of the neutral Powers.

That the Governor-General shall never make use of the Comité National to force the Belgian population to employ itself in the service of the German Army contrary to the stipulations of the Hague conventions.

That the Comité National shall be the intermediary in the purchase of the harvest of grains in the territory placed under the orders of the Governor-General in Belgium, and that the distribution of these grains shall be done through the care of the said Comité in the same manner as the distributions of the imported goods; that likewise the Comité shall continue to distribute help in kind to the needy under the conditions determined by the previous agreements made between the Governor-General and the protecting ministers.

I have taken note of the communication of Your Excellency that the British Government will facilitate, in addition to the importation of grains, the importation likewise of peas, bacon, beans, rice, lard, and maize for human consumption, as long as the importation of these articles does not represent the replacing of other articles requisitioned by order of the Governor-General.

I have likewise taken note that Your Excellency will cause to be communicated to the British Government the modifications which might be brought by the Governor-General to the ensemble of the regulations decided upon by the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the protecting ministers.

In conformity with the request which Your Excellency is pleased to make of me in his letter, I have the honor, in the name of the Governor-General, to confirm to Your Excellency the assurances and guarantees previously given and which are specified in the preceding stipulations.

I have communicated to the Governor-General the assurance which Your Excellency was pleased to give me, that the work patronized by Your Excellency shall continue to exercise its beneficent action under the conditions of strict neutrality justifying the aid and the protection which the Governor-General and the authorities placed under his orders have not ceased to bring to this institution since its creation.

The Governor-General is happy to state that the renewed assurance to this effect which Your Excellency has been pleased to give, constitutes for him a guarantee that the humanitarian purpose of this work can be pursued without injury to the rights which accrue to the occupant of the country, and to the interests of which he has charge.

I embrace this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my deep consideration.

(Signed) LANCKEN

[*Translation*]

5. *Adjustment of Functions of C.R.B. and C.N. July 1915*

From its inception in October 1914 to July 1915 the Commission had encountered and overcome a series of forbidding diplomatic, financial, and physical obstacles, had imported 650,000 tons of provisions costing $44,000,000, and a nation of over 9,000,000 had been saved from famine. At the end of these eight months the Commission's stocks afloat and contracted for assured for a few months at least a steady flow of the stream of supplies.

Though the contributions to relief had fallen away considerably after the first months' generosity, Hoover had secured, after arduous negotiations, a basic income for the undertaking from Allied Government sources.[8] The Germans, moreover, were not only living up to their original guarantees as to non-interference with imported supplies, but had agreed, after more negotiations, to the principle that native crops would be reserved for the civil population.[9] The activities of the Commission were known all over the world and officially and unofficially it was the recognized channel of relief in the occupied territories. Its numerous committees engaged in the collection of gifts were in every country, and its administrative agencies were established in the principal ports of North and South America and in India

[8] See chapter iv.

[9] See chapter viii.

and Australasia. The C.R.B. flag on the high seas was a well-known and respected emblem. Within Belgium the distribution of relief as has been described was controlled by the Commission with the directors in Brussels and delegates throughout the provinces, and by the Comité National with its machinery extending down to the smallest commune embracing a membership of some 40,000 individuals. American intervention had contributed decisively in breaking through the difficulties that blocked the enterprise in the beginning; now this path appeared hopefully straight and clear.

DOCUMENT NO. 41

Procès-Verbal of a meeting in Brussels between representatives of the C.R.B. and the C.N., 20 July 1915, setting forth the functions of the two organizations

BRUSSELS, 20 July 1915

I

It was proposed by the Commission for Relief in Belgium that it was desirable to consider if the time had now arrived when the retirement of the Commission from the relief work in Belgium should be considered. The points advanced by the Commission for consideration in discussion of this proposal are as follows:

1. While initially, owing to the disorganization and restriction of movement and meeting, the Comité National in its components of provincial and communal committees required the assistance of the members of the Commission in building up and carrying on its organization, the now improved situation and the more liberal attitude of the military authorities in these particulars no longer, for this reason, require our active participation in executive work.

2. The Belgian people have so far recuperated from the total financial disorganization that they are now able, through their own resources and through the resources placed at their disposal by the Belgian Government at Le Havre, together with a charitable income from abroad, not only to finance the ravitaillement, but also in a general way to undertake the care of the destitute, and that therefore, at some early date, no further appeals for the charity of the world in their support is necessary, or if necessary, they could be made by the C.N.

3. The demonstration, by eight months' experience, that the Germans scrupulously perform their undertakings with regard to non-interference in the distribution and consumption of the imported foodstuffs, renders the sponsorship of a neutral body less important, and it is felt by the Commission, in view of this experience, that the Allied Governments should be approached to now

accept the assurances of their own allies, the Belgians, and that the whole line of guarantees can quite properly be transferred from the Commission for Relief in Belgium to the Comité National.

4. The joint organizations having carried through the negotiations by which the native foodstuff production in Belgium is conserved to the civil population in the occupation zone, and a reasonable arrangement in prospect for the Etappen, the rôle performed by the Commission for Relief in Belgium in conserving native food supplies has become less important.

In Summary.—The sole object of the Americans in their whole work in Belgium has been embraced in one expression: "To help the Belgians." The Belgian people obviously require no help from any other nationality the moment they are in position to obtain free play to their abilities and resources, and it appears to the members of the Commission that the general political situation has now ameliorated to a point where there is free play obtainable, at least to such an extent as is required for the purposes of this work. Therefore, the political, financial, and administrative necessity of American administrative help having now been nearly consummated, it appears to the members of the Commission that we should prepare the necessary steps for retirement from the situation. This retirement necessarily must take place gradually, and it is the view of the Commission that it could be consummated by the middle of October, thus marking the complete year of service.

II

The Comité National stated it could not agree to the above views, and that it was impossible that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should retire for the following reasons:

1. The Belgians had no certainty of freedom of movement or meeting, either internally or across frontiers, which would enable them to carry on the large trading operations involved in the ravitaillement.

2. The Commission for Relief in Belgium, being an independent and neutral body, founded on merely humanitarian principles, has acted and must continue to act as the guardian of the Belgian people; the presence of its members in Belgium, if for no other reason, gives confidence of protection and continuity of the food supply to the entire people, and tends to maintain order; its American complexion, and the support which it holds among humanitarian people the world over, is in itself a guarantee that the stream of foodstuffs will not be interfered with by either of the belligerents.

3. The Comité National does not conceive that the fresh and difficult problems which constantly arise will require less moral and diplomatic support than hitherto.

4. The disorganization of Belgium, while somewhat ameliorated, is still such as to make absolutely necessary the presence of a controlling body in the administration of the ravitaillement and aid to the destitute, because this function gives a cohesive character to

the national, provincial, and communal committees which would break down if American aid were withdrawn.

5. The present financial resources of the two committees are precarious, and may at any time again require the energetic intervention of the Americans, either in banking arrangements or in charity.

6. In summary, the Comité National is certain that it could not go on without (1) the political and moral support of the Commission; (2) that the executive work could not continue without the co-operation of the Commission; and (3) that the finance, purchase, and transport operations are impossible at the present time by Belgians alone.

Therefore, the Comité National not only protests at the idea of withdrawal, but specifically requests the Commission to continue its activities without idea of cessation.

III

On the above grounds it is decided that the ravitaillement and care of the destitute in Belgium shall continue as a joint undertaking of the Comité National and the Commission for Relief. In order that the future administrative relations of each may be more clearly defined, it is agreed:

1. For administrative purposes the functions of both institutions are continued in the following three departments:

a) The Provisioning Department, for the ravitaillement of the entire population.

b) The Benevolent Department, for the care of the destitute.

c) The Exchange Department, for facilitating financial operations.

2. *Provisioning Department.*—The chief executives of the C.N. and C.R.B. will from time to time determine in consultation:

a) The nature and quantities of foodstuffs to be purchased abroad.

b) The prices at which they are to be sold by the C.R.B. to the C.N. and by them to the subcommittees and the public.

c) The regional distribution of these foodstuffs in Belgium, together with the bread questions of rations and milling percentage, etc. These goods will be delivered by the C.R.B. to the regional warehouses, and the executive responsibility of the C.R.B. ceases upon delivery of the foodstuffs to the regional warehouses (the mills being considered regional warehouses for this purpose); the whole of the distribution after that point being undertaken by the C.N. and its component committees.

3. *Benevolent Department* (*Secours ordinaire*).—In the care of the destitute, it is agreed that the gifts entrusted by the benevolent world for the benefit of the destitute in Belgium shall be, together with the profits of the C.R.B. on its Provisioning Department, remitted to the C.N. through the Exchange Department of the C.R.B. in the form of a monthly subvention, of such amount as may be determined by the executive heads of the two bodies from time to

time. These moneys and gifts shall be distributed as subventions from the C.N. to the provincial committees and other benevolent organizations, and they shall be allocated as a supplement to the other resources of the various subcommittees in proportion to the actual necessities of these bodies. It is understood that all these gifts are to be used by local organizations for the provision of "relief in kind." In order that the C.R.B. may properly account to the donors of these funds for the use of their gifts, the C.N. undertakes to furnish monthly a statement, audited by the accountant of the C.R.B., of the whole of the uses these gifts have been applied to.

All gift food received by the C.R.B. shall be sold to the Provisioning Department of the C.R.B. at its replacement value, and the moneys added to the cash subscriptions received by the C.R.B. and included in the above remittances.

4. *Exchange Department.*—The C.R.B. Exchange Department will handle the moneys remitted from abroad to the C.N. These remittances are to be divided into the following classes:

a) Commercial Exchange; being payments to be made by the C.N. to private individuals in Belgium against similar sums of money paid to the C.R.B. abroad.

b) Benevolent funds, as above described (*Secours ordinaire*).

c) Remittances from the Belgian Government at Le Havre to the C.N. (*Secours extraordinaire*). In respect of these remittances, it is distinctly understood that the C.R.B. takes no responsibility whatever, the C.N. undertaking to account to the Belgian Government for the distribution of these funds.

5. It is also understood that no money is to be knowingly remitted by the C.R.B., nor to be knowingly distributed by the C.N., that is disapproved by either of the belligerent Powers, and that the C.R.B. has no responsibility of any kind in connection with remittances for *Secours extraordinaire.*

6. In order to facilitate co-operation in the above matters, it is agreed that the following interlocking of officials of the two bodies shall continue:

a) The Director and other members of the Commission as at present shall continue to act as members of the executive committee of the C.N.

b) The provincial delegates of the C.R.B. shall sit as members of all the committees, provincial and local, in their respective provinces.

c) The representatives of the C.N. shall have the same relation to the C.R.B. in Rotterdam, London, and New York.

7. The accounts between the organizations will be adjusted as nearly as may be possible each month, the C.N. and C.R.B. furnishing audited statements as to their internal position as often as is practicable.

DOCUMENT NO. 42

Memorandum on internal organization and duties of C.R.B. in Belgium (not including Northern France)

BRUSSELS, July 1915

(1) The personnel in Belgium consists of:

Director

Chief Inspector
Shipping Manager Provincial Delegates Advisory Members
Secretariat

(2) The ravitaillement and the care of the destitute is a joint undertaking of the C.N. and the C.R.B. The division of functions is difficult to define, but so far as the C.R.B. is concerned, the one dominating idea is simply to help the Belgians. A memorandum settled with the C.N. on this subject is attached (No. 1), also a review of the conditions imposed by the Allied Governments (No. 2).

(3) The work of the C.R.B. is based upon intimate co-operation among its members, but in a general way the Director has necessarily the final decision in and co-ordination of matters affecting the C.R.B. internally in Belgium, and with its general staff co-operates with the C.R.B. abroad and with the heads of the C.N. in Brussels.

(4) The work of delegates falls in three main phases:

a) General service
b) The guarantees
c) Transportation and statistics

(5) The general duties of the provincial delegates are most difficult to define, and it is considered that for our purposes we should define a minimum of absolute duties, and that any further activity should only be undertaken at the request from time to time of the provincial committee and subcommittees themselves. It may be stated in general that this minimum is intended to entirely exclude, as soon as possible, executive and office functions. Furthermore it is our desire that there shall be no dictation to the provincial committees and no dictation to subcommittees or individuals, unless requested to do so by the superior committees themselves. We are here to help, not to order.

The prime and most important function of the delegates is to maintain representation in the provinces of the guardian neutral body, and to exemplify its ideals in constantly rendering aid and moral support to the people in their difficulties of ravitaillement and care of the destitute. Particularly it is to be assumed that the whole of the committee structure engaged in this work is now developed to a stage where it will function itself except for occasional difficulties. It is the desire of the directors to strongly impress delegates with the fact that they consider the time has come when the delegates should not occupy themselves with any executive functions and a minimum of office routine, but to direct themselves to help at the points of difficulty and to discover the points of abuse of our ideals and undertakings. It is our desire that the

delegates should move frequently and freely over their entire areas in constant consultation with all committees involved in this work giving them such aid and advice as may seem appropriate, but under no circumstance to give direction unless requested by a superior committee to give orders. In case that injustice, incompetence, or abuses are found to be in operation, it is desired that each of such incidents may be taken up as a special case in itself, and the facts made known to the committee members most nearly concerned. If remedy is not made, the matter should be reported to the provincial committee, and if no appropriate action is taken in that quarter, then the matter should be reported to the head office of the Commission in Brussels, where it will be dealt with by the Director. It does not appear to us that the Commission is from now on concerned in enforcing any draconian scheme of rationing the population, as long as there is no real privation and no injustice. The most valued function of the Commission, for which it will stand out in the memory of the Belgian people, is the relief to the destitute. That is, together with the political phases mentioned, the prime *raison d'être* of the Commission; but in this department, as well as in the ravitaillement, we believe that the attitude of the delegates shall be entirely of the order of inspection and advice and not of executive action. The directors believe that with the abandonment of executive work, the delegates will have more time at their disposal in which to visit the various branches of the general organization to study their results. In order to maintain the intimate relations of the provincial delegates with the provincial committees they will sit as members of all the committees in their provinces, but it is definitely understood on both sides that they have no responsibility for any action; that their position is purely advisory. The relation of the delegates to the local German authorities shall be purely one of a friendly intermediary.

(6) The guarantees are of two sorts, the guarantees against military interference and the guarantees of justice in distribution. The first matter is a purely passive function, requiring no action by the delegates, unless the entire event of contravention occurs, in which case the matter should be investigated and the facts reported to the Director in Brussels for direction as to the policy to be pursued. The second phase embraces the fact that the military shall not interfere with any persons receiving food, and any incident must be treated in the same way. Beyond this, it also embraces the broad question of justice in distribution which is elaborated above, but our conception is that this can be expressed so that there shall be no privation.

(7) The Commission has the duty, under the conditions imposed by the Powers, of retaining possession of the foodstuffs until their final delivery in regional warehouses, for which purposes mills are considered as regional warehouses. Such foodstuffs will be consigned from Rotterdam to the C.R.B. The bills of lading must necessarily be handled by the delegates and endorsed over to the proper committees, and when receipts for the bills of lading are received by the delegates and sent to Brussels, their interest in the

matter entirely ceases. In order to intelligently guide the purchasing and transportation department of the Commission, it is fundamental that certain statistical information should be secured by the delegates and placed in the hands of the Brussels office. This information relates to the consumption, stocks, and requirements, the more detailed discussion of which is unnecessary here.

6. *The Vermittlungsstelle. November–December 1915*

Toward the end of the year 1915 the Commission encountered new and serious difficulties with the German officials in Belgium. It had been the policy of the authorities to entrust the supervision of all matters relating to the relief work to the Civil Administration of the German General Government in Belgium. The diplomatic negotiations passed, however, through the hands of the Political Department of the General Government, headed by Baron von der Lancken. For some time a rivalry between these two departments had been developing as to which should have the privilege of surveillance of the activities of the Commission and the Comité National. One product of this rivalry was the attempt of the Civil Administration to control relief operations by forcing a reorganization of the Comité National in June 1915. This resulted in a threat by the British Government to revise its policy with respect to relief unless the Germans gave new and specific assurances that they would not interfere with distribution.[10] The Governor-General, thereupon, had placed the control of relief operations largely in the hands of the Political Department. As the object of the attentions of these competing departments the Commission suffered. Matters came to a head in the fall of 1915 when the Political Department made the espionage charges described in Document 43. At this particular moment Hoover was discussing with the German General Staff a project for the relief in Poland,[11] in which the High Command was much interested. Hoover immediately declared to the military authorities that extension of the Commission's activities was out of the question since the civil officials appeared unwilling to co-operate in the relief already in hand. The pressure which the High Command

[10] See Documents 36–40.

[11] See chapter xi.

applied to the Governor-General in Brussels had prompt results. The espionage charges, which were unfounded, were withdrawn, and, what was most important for the relief organizations, a new department, the Vermittlungsstelle, was created to regularize relations between the Commission and the German authorities.

DOCUMENT NO. 43

Memorandum, GIBSON ON CONFERENCE WITH VON DER LANCKEN, *covering German demands for removal of three American delegates on suspicion of espionage*

BRUSSELS, 30 November 1915

This morning Baron von der Lancken requested me to call upon him and immediately brought up the cases of the three men described in my memorandum of November 8th and stated that he desired to add to that list one more name, that of Mr. Poland,[12] to whom he objected as having written offensive letters (*lettres grossières*) to the Political Department. He showed me a letter from Mr. Poland, a copy of which is appended hereto. After reading the letter I stated that it had long been the custom of the Commission to deal on matters of loading, imports in Belgium, and general business with Doctor Rieth of the Politische Abteilung and that as a business letter the one in question contained nothing of an objectionable character, that the impatience shown in it was quite comprehensible owing to the interference to which the Commission had been subjected in the question of lighters and tugs entirely imperiling the work with which the letter dealt.

Baron von der Lancken began to take up the general question of removing the four men, but I interrupted him, stating that it seemed quite useless to consider the question at the present time as it was only one minor incident in matters of graver importance. I said that the conditions under which the Belgians were being fed had been steadily growing worse for some months, that the members of the Commission had been subjected to all sorts of affronts and outrages and the entire work threatened in many directions, and that far from receiving that sympathetic co-operation and adherence to the spirit of the work to which we were entitled, the German authorities in the occupied territory in Belgium seemed to be placing endless obstacles in our way. I stated that this was not true in the north of France, where the military authorities evidently understood the vital importance of the work and where we had received co-operation and understanding support. Going back a little I told Baron von der Lancken that Mr. Hoover had, while in America, informed the government officials of the character of the difficulties under which the Commission was working and that it was agreed that at any time he and his colleagues felt

[12] W. B. Poland, then Director of the C.R.B. in Belgium.

that their dignity and self-respect as Americans could no longer tolerate the treatment accorded them and they withdrew from the work, they would be supported in such action; that Mr. Hoover upon his return to England and learning of recent developments laid the situation before British officials and had endeavored to arrange that in the event of necessary withdrawal the work could be taken over by other neutrals and that the British Government had emphatically declined to entertain such an idea. I impressed upon Baron von der Lancken that the British Government had permitted the shipping of food into Belgium only because of the pressure of public opinion and in order to avoid giving the Germans an opportunity to say that the British were starving their allies. I pointed out to him very frankly that if the Commission were to withdraw and justify its withdrawal by a statement that it could not tolerate the treatment accorded it by the German authorities and the conditions under which the work was done, the British Government would not of course fail to seize the opportunity to stop the work by saying that under such conditions no other neutral body could hope to succeed and at the same time placing the German Government in an unfavorable light before the world. I stated to Baron von der Lancken that we had put up with extremely bad treatment and many serious outrages for many months, but that the time had come when we could no longer ask any American gentleman engaged in the work to submit to the sort of treatment they had had in the past; that Mr. Hoover and his colleagues were now seriously considering the withdrawal of the Commission and the stopping of the work; that the American people would not for one moment stand that men engaged in a work which in effect represented the American people should lower the dignity of their country by acceptance of such treatment.

Baron von der Lancken then exclaimed somewhat impatiently that it was all right so far as Germany was concerned; that she had plenty of food now coming from the Balkans and that the Belgians would not starve; that they would be given a ration of black bread and that if they did not like it and caused any riots, they would be shot down. (*Nous leur donnerons du pain noir à manger, s'ils n'aiment pas cela et precipitent des bagarres, nous tirerons dessus, tous bonnement.*)

I said I was glad that he had informed me that we were no longer needed but I was sorry that he had not told me so before, inasmuch as we were continuing the work only because we thought it was needed by the German Government as well as by other belligerents.

Baron von der Lancken's remarks, however, were apparently only a slight outburst of temper and he attempted to soften his remarks by saying very agreeable things about the work of the Commission. I told Baron von der Lancken that he must not think that the Commission was trying to avoid continuing the work, but that on the contrary it would be very happy if a satisfactory solution could be found under which the men engaged in the work of the Commission could be given treatment as gentlemen and proper facilities granted for carrying on the work.

I stated that I failed to see why a reasonable amount of time

and attention by a high official should not be warranted by the Commission's work; that the President and the Secretary of State of the United States found it possible to give their personal attention to the matter, that the King of Spain was himself deeply interested in it, and that Mr. Hoover found no difficulty in securing the undivided attention of the British Prime Minister and of his colleagues in the Cabinet whenever the work of the Commission prompted him to do so. I intimated that it would be a very good thing if some one official with real authority could be delegated to deal with the work of the Commission. I concluded by saying that Mr. Hoover and his colleagues were very unhappy and discouraged about the whole matter, that they had come into the work full of enthusiasm and had made considerable sacrifices in order to devote themselves to the work, that it would of course be a keen disappointment to feel that they had so far failed through no fault of their own as to be obliged to abandon the work.

I added that I wished him to consider this conversation as quite informal and unofficial; that strictly speaking I should not have communicated with him upon the subject until plans had been more definitely formulated covering all the matters of first importance and could be formally presented to him by the Spanish Minister, the Dutch Chargé d'Affaires, and myself. I said, however, that I considered it only honest to tell him frankly what the situation was, rather than quibble on the minor matter about which he had wished to consult me; that he now understood how we felt and I hoped that he would understand that the Commission was very much in earnest and that a way might be found to solve the difficulties.

Baron von der Lancken apparently realized the seriousness of the situation and said that he would be very glad to talk it over with us further at the first opportunity, thanked me for my frankness in telling him of the matter so freely, and took leave of me in an unusually friendly manner.

(Signed) GIBSON

DOCUMENT NO. 44

Memorandum, ON CONFERENCE VERNON KELLOGG, CASPAR WHITNEY, AND HOOVER WITH VON KESSLER, WENGERSKY, AND UHL OF GENERAL STAFF, *regarding unsatisfactory treatment of Commission by German administration in Belgium* (by Kellogg)

BRUSSELS, 2 December, 1915

Mr. Hoover stated he was glad to have the opportunity to go exhaustively into the whole situation; that the relations of the Commission with the Staff in the north of France had always been so cordial and the Staff engagements so justly and liberally carried out, the Staff attitude so open and frank, that he felt he could be frank even to brutality. That the situation in Belgium was becoming intolerable and that the ravitaillement of Northern France must col-

lapse with that of Belgium. He sketched briefly the history of the Commission and its relations to the General Government, laying stress on the fact that while Governor von Bissing's attitude was correct, if not cordial, he was surrounded by an absolute pack of bureaucratic underlings whose sole desire and mission seemed to be to seize anything in Belgium and dress it up in some form designed to attract the Governor's attention to themselves and their energies. That it was patent that the utmost jealousy existed among these departments, and that we were the shuttlecock with which they beat each other over the head, hoping the Governor would notice their valiant conduct. He sketched the relations, first when the C.R.B. and the C.N. were under the Civil Department: how their control had been seized by the Political Department last June from the Civil Department, on the impeachment of the committee's bad political activities; how this was but an incident in the war between von Sandt and von der Lancken, and how von der Lancken had been put to it ever since to justify his representations to the Governor of that time. That we had been subjected to intolerable destructive inquisition, no remote helpfulness in attitude, and how gradually this was degenerating into violation of the spirit of the agreements.

He sketched the attempts to manipulate the relief, in violation of the undertakings about forcing labor through control of relief, and pointed out that the Commission would not go on one minute if it were to become an implement to force the population, against its will and consent, to work for the Germany Army. That to use the control of men's food to force the civilian population to disloyalty to its government was a thing we would not stand for on humane grounds, to say nothing of the international undertakings upon which we were founded.

He took up the Poland incident as an example of bureaucratic tyranny and incompetence and gave them a sketch of this transaction and the notorious letter involved. They read the letter, and Kessler remarked that its contents were innocent and justified and that it was in text and character far different from that represented to him by the authorities. Hoover pointed out that if experienced men such as Poland were to be jerked out of the country on the breath of an arrogant clerk, in this manner, we would have to chuck the job at once. Hoover went into the incident of the three men and the failure to get any reasons for the attitude about them. He pointed out the hopelessness of obtaining men of character and honor if they were to be treated in this way. He stated that the heads of the business had a right to know what the charges were. Von Kessler said that he had heard several items, one of which was that information was conveyed verbally by these men to Young at Rotterdam as to the September offensive and through this route to the Allied Governments; that Young had proposed to introduce two spies into Belgium with Commission passes but had been stopped by protest of his American colleagues. He said he was unaware of the details but that in our position spread over the whole rear, the Staff were greatly disturbed by these reports. He said they

had the utmost confidence in Hoover, Kellogg, Whitney, and most of the men, but that such matters as this transcended every food question.

Hoover agreed and stated at once that the matter must be gone into to the very bottom; that they would find him more Catholic than the Pope on the slightest breath of justifiable suspicion; that from his point of view he required no such evidence as was needed in law courts but the ground for reasonable suspicion would be sufficient; he expressed his absolute horror at the idea that ———— would jeopardize the lives of 9,000,000 people by such conduct, for it must genuinely reflect on the neutral character of the Commission. He expressed his absolute disbelief that there was a word of truth in it and stated he believed that it was a tittle-tattle produced by von der Lancken in accord with his general attitude. He suggested that any capable German officer be given the dossier and that this officer and Hoover should jointly hold an inquiry to establish, not guilt, but reasonable suspicion.

Von Kessler also said there was some complaint about a Major Winchell that Mr. Young had applied for a pass for, and gave the impression that they believed that he was an Allied agent. Mr. Hoover explained the circumstances of his belonging to the Salvation Army, etc., and that he had made the foolish inquiry whether he might be the head of their intelligence service, which joke had poor results. He stated he believed it could be proved to be absolute nonsense. As an example, neither Green nor van Schaick had arrived from America until after the date of the great offensive. Von Kessler agreed that more data should be given.

On the main issues von Kessler stated that he and his superiors had taken the matter up energetically with General von Bissing and recommended him to create a special department to look after the C.R.B. and C.N. and that it had been done, and that he had brought Captain Uhl from the Staff to take charge of our relations to this department. We all expressed pleasure at this arrangement, learning incidentally that Captain Uhl had been chosen because he was a good American resident of Santa Barbara, California. Von Kessler said that Wengersky would remain in Brussels for a fortnight to get the new bureau running. Mr. Hoover mentioned that Captain Merton had turned up, saying he was going to be associated with us; that we liked him and hoped it would be so. Von Kessler said it would be arranged as we wished.

Hoover then elaborated on the indivisibility of the C.R.B. and the C.N. in all departments, the fears and suspicions on all sides as to proposals made by the General Government, and the disastrous results that would follow to food and tranquillity, and hoped the new department would meet these matters in an intelligent manner. This, von Kessler and Uhl assured us would be the case. The discussion went on to the relief of Poland, which the General Staff wished the Commission to undertake.

DOCUMENT NO. 45

Memorandum, OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN HOOVER AND VON DER LANCKEN. *Von der Lancken announces that the Governor-General has decided to set up the Vermittlungsstelle*

BRUSSELS, 4 December 1915

Von der Lancken said he was glad to tell me that the Governor had decided to set up a new committee, comprising representatives from each—the Political, Finance, and Civil Departments, together with an officer from the General Staff, which would take over all questions relating to the C.R.B. and C.N. That Blum would represent the first, Pochee the second, ———— the third, and Uhl the fourth. Captain Merton would be censor and general intermediary. He stated he had sent for Poland and that incident was now out of the way happily and that all the broad, general, and detailed questions which had arisen lately could go over to the new Commission which should be established in ten days or so.

We then talked peace, the relief of Poland, etc., for about an hour.

7. *Inspection and Control. January–February 1916*

In Great Britain and elsewhere there was considerable opposition to Belgian relief on the ground that it was advantageous to the Germans, since it relieved them of the responsibility of supplying food to the regions they had invaded. Those who were of this mind were naturally quick to seize upon any evidence that seemed to show that the Germans were profiting directly from relief. For this as well as for more obvious reasons the relief organization made the most strenuous efforts to prevent even relatively unimportant and infrequent leakages. But to prevent isolated sale by uninformed or unscrupulous individuals to German agents was a difficult matter. Exaggerated reports of small leakages and British threats to stop all imports into Belgium made drastic action necessary. The service of relief inspection was overhauled and a new General Department of Inspection and Control in which the Commission played a greater part than formerly was created.[18]

Another difficulty arose at about this time from the diversion of Belgian livestock to Germany, and by German meat buying in the occupied territory. For a time the British stopped entirely the C.R.B.'s imports of bacon and lard and

[18] Document 51 gives the functions of this Department.

threatened further restrictions unless the exports of all foodstuffs from Belgium ended. Hoover's negotiations with the German officials on this whole question finally produced guarantees acceptable to the British.

DOCUMENT NO. 46

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *reporting leakage of relief supplies from Belgium into Germany, restricting C.R.B. imports and demanding reimbursement by Germans of supplies equivalent to those exported, and intimating that the whole relief activity might be stopped if leakages continued*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
21 January 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

A most unsatisfactory position has arisen with regard to your importations of rice into Belgium. In recent conferences with me you have estimated the monthly amounts which you wish to import at 5,000 tons. In September, October, and November last, however, you shipped from Rotterdam much larger amounts—namely, 13,064, 9,361 and 11,735 tons, respectively, the greater part of which was destined for Belgium. You informed me that these were advance shipments, and that you intended to stop further imports in subsequent months.

As I told you some time ago we were much disturbed by exports of rice from Belgium to Germany via Holland in October and November last. We now discover that this is due to the sale by the Relief Committees in Belgium of portions of the stocks with which you had provided them and to the purchase of these stocks by the Germans.

As you know, I have frequently warned you against any accumulations of stocks in Belgium for fear of some such incident. I need not emphasise the serious nature of what has occurred, undermining as it must, our whole confidence in the watertightness of your system.

I must therefore ask you for a statement of the full amounts of rice thus sold by the Committees, and we shall expect to hear within a month that the Germans have handed over an equivalent amount of rice to the Comité National from German stocks. Until this happens, you must import no more rice into Belgium, and if it does not happen within a month we shall reconsider, not only the question of rice imports but the question of your imports as a whole, since it will then be evident that we cannot rely either upon the efficiency of your organisation in Belgium nor upon the respect of the Germans for their own pledges.

For the moment, your importations of rice into France may continue, but only on the absolute condition that you accumulate no stocks there whatever, and if we do not receive satisfaction within a month, this also will be reconsidered.

Yours sincerely
(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 47

Telegrams, FRANCQUI TO HOOVER *and* W. B. POLAND TO HOOVER, *stating that reports of leakages were greatly exaggerated*

BRUSSELS, 30 January 1916

FOR HOOVER, LONDON:

"Received your letter No. 35. It was our agents who pointed out to us six weeks ago the disappearance, and since then the investigation has been in progress. It proved that your information is much exaggerated. Our subcommittees in general are not acquainted with these abuses, resulting from German private company who did this business in ignorance with Belgian dealers, who on their part purchased from consumers. General Government has been informed. They are making concurrent investigations with ourselves and have explained to us that all mistakes by Germans will be done away with. We are energetically acting in the same manner towards Belgian guilty parties. In any case you can now be sure that the information obtained by us proves that this matter does not reach proportions as indicated by you. I am writing."

FRANCQUI

[*Translation*]

Am requested by Smith[14] to inform you the irregularities have been very much exaggerated; information from Mr. Francqui today confirmed. Final report will probably not be ready before a week."

POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 48

Letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *reporting the investigation of leakage of food into Germany and showing that only small quantities of relief supplies were involved*

LONDON, 8 February 1916

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

EXPORT FROM BELGIUM OF OUR IMPORTS

This matter has now been under rigorous investigation in Belgium and I send you some of the data.

(1) The bills of lading of the 18,000 odd tons of goods shipped from Antwerp after the 1st September have been inspected and the only items of a character at all related to our imports were: rice, 855 tons; beans, 14 tons; corn flour, 10 tons. Of this total quantity, it appears that a considerable amount was gathered from old stocks, and there is constantly some small rivulet of these supplies across the frontier from Holland.

[14] Robinson Smith, C.R.B. representative in the Province of Hainaut.

Judging by the instances which our people have been able to trace down, it appears a good deal less than one-half could have come from our imported material; thus approximately 400 tons have leaked away from a total of 1,200,000 tons imported.

(2) We find that some of the local committees, finding the fabulous price at which they could sell rice, have done so entirely in innocence of heart and have invested the money in potatoes, thus getting larger value for their destitute with the same funds. They have all been soundly lectured on this subject, and further the entire inspection staff in Belgium is being changed from the joint control of the Comité National and the C.R.B. to the sole control of the C.R.B.

Furthermore, it appears that all this stuff was gathered up by one German firm, newly established in Belgium for the export of commodities which are not in question, such as wine. The German authorities, in order to show fair play, are putting this firm out of action so far as dealing in any commodity which we may import is concerned.

I think you may take it that these measures will settle the business once and for all and that the strenuous tone of your note calling attention to this matter has done a world of good; still, I do not feel that in the midst of our other difficulties and complexities the matter merits further pursuit.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 49

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *referring to reports that Germans were taking food imported by the C.R.B. into Ghent*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
11 March 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

A report has reached us that the Germans are taking half of the food imported by the Commission into the district of Ghent. It is said that they are giving this food to their soldiers and are also sending it in part to Breslau. I should be glad if you would make an inquiry into this question because, although I know that this kind of story is a common one in Belgium, this particular account comes to us from an unusually trustworthy source, and it refers to the military zone in Belgium where I have always felt some doubt whether your control is sufficient to secure the safe disposal of your imports.

As you may shortly be going to Belgium there are one or two other points of a similar nature which I should like you to inquire into.

In the first place, I have statistics of shipments from Belgium to Germany via Holland for the two months November 28th to January 27th. These shipments contain the following items:

On one boat 150 tons of rice and 150 tons of coffee.

On two other boats an aggregate of 1,700 tons of coffee, rice and beans.

On another boat 400 tons of coffee, rice, beans, and flour.

On another 450 tons of coffee, rice, beans, and oil nuts.

Two further boats carried 1,200 tons of rice and beans, and 300 tons of rice, respectively.

These figures suggest a grave suspicion not only that shipments of Belgian native stocks, such as coffee and oil nuts, are being exported freely, which of course we knew before, but also that the leakage of your rice from Belgium, of which we have had evidence, is combined with a corresponding leakage of beans.

Finally, we have had a report that one particular mill owner in Brussels, by name Vuylsteke, is using the oil extracted in milling your grain for sale for the Germans for munitions purposes, and we are told that Vuylsteke is working in close touch with the Germans.

You will, of course, regard all this information as strictly confidential so far as it might betray the source from which it came.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 50

Letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *reporting a new investigation of leakage and the reorganization of the Bureau of Inspection and Control to prevent further trouble of this character*

LONDON, 5 April 1916

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

LEAKAGES OF IMPORTED FOODSTUFFS

Together with my American colleagues in Belgium, I have now completed a renewed inquiry into this matter all over that country. As I recently informed you, we early in March entirely reorganized the Bureau of Inspection and Control, by which it was brought entirely under American direction and considerably expanded. We have set up a complete bureau in each province, with an American head solely devoted to it, and in addition have now instituted an independent national service for the whole of the country, entirely separate from the Provincial Bureaux. In addition to the former inspectors, some of whom we have changed, we have reinforced the staff by recruits from former colonial, school, and railway and police services. A considerable number of these men are engaged in checking the accounts of the communal committees and

in the comparison of the issue against food cards with the receipts into the communal magazines. Another section is devoted to tracing the origin of every parcel of overseas foodstuffs which we can discover in private hands. In this latter matter we have arranged with the 60 district Procureurs de Roi to co-operate in prosecutions, which they are doing vigorously. I enclose herewith specimen copies of the material presented by this Bureau to the weekly meetings of the Commission members in Brussels, at two or three different meetings, in order that you may get some idea of its activities.

From our experience of these bureaux, two conclusions are quite positive:

1. That the leakages from our imported foodstuffs are and have been extraordinarily small, and, in any event, the bulk of these leakages arises from Belgian causes as distinguished from German causes. For instance, we have found no gray flour of our peculiar composition (82 per cent milled wheat with 5 to 10 per cent maize) in private hands. We have, however, discovered some white flour of Belgian origin, which comes from the milling by peasants of hidden wheat and by the sifting out by bakers of a certain percentage of white flour from our supplies. The high price of white flour to wealthy Belgian customers is a powerful stimulation to small traffic in this direction and is impossible wholly to control.

Again, the brewers in Belgium, who are now desperate for brewing materials, have been from time to time buying maize from farmers out of the supplies which were issued to them for fodder purposes prior to the time when we stopped such issues.

2. There is a very much larger amount of smuggling from Holland in overseas materials than had previously been believed. From sources which are reliable I shall be able to present to you in the course of a few days some evidence as to quantities. They are very considerable, and at certain points the German authorities required the smugglers to sell to them at low prices from 30 to 50 per cent of their imports, the smugglers being allowed to sell the remainder of their imports to Belgians at any prices they could obtain.

The enormous gap between prices in Holland and prices in Belgium has created a vacuum, the suction into which it is impossible for the Dutch Government wholly to control. The traffic is not one of moral turpitude, since it has the justification of "feeding the Belgians" and since it is more or less simply the maintenance of the custom of trade across the frontier. In consequence, there is no moral feeling or public opinion against this traffic in Holland. I am convinced that the Dutch authorities make every possible effort to stop this traffic, but 300 kilometers of artificial border in an agricultural country with such intense populations on both sides, all intent on the traffic, makes any tight dam absolutely impossible. It just happens that the overseas imports are the foodstuffs of the most concentrated form, such as rice, beans, bacon, and lard, and, in consequence, these are favored articles of traffic. It is our impression, however, that the majority of the bacon, lard, and beans are Dutch, originating near the frontier. As an indica-

tion of the profit to be made in this traffic, the price of lard in Brussels is from Frs. 13 to Frs. 15 per kilo against Frs. 3 in Holland, or a profit on smuggling of £250 per ton. As one indication of the amount of smuggling, at our instance, 35 prosecutions were started in the Province of Limbourg against persons who had foodstuffs in their possession of the overseas type, and in 30 of these cases the owners were able to establish their Dutch origin.

On the 15th of March the Germans put in force a complete prohibition on all food exports from Belgium, and they appear to be enforcing it at all points vigorously, even to the taking from soldiers returning to Germany on leave the small amounts of butter or other articles which they carry with them. Furthermore at our request the German firm who exported foodstuffs from Antwerp has been suppressed from doing business in Belgium. The German authorities informed me that an inquiry into the operations of this firm indicated that they had purchased less than 50 tons of material which could have arisen from our imports, the balance of their exports being Dutch stuff smuggled over the frontier. This corroborates our own conclusions from tracing our own communal leakages. This particular organization maintained agencies along the frontier for the purpose of purchasing from smugglers, and they were able to aggregate considerable quantities for export to Germany.

For reasons which I will set out in another communication, the ration being issued by the communal committees is far below the necessities of the population and in such small quantities that the resale by individuals is improbable in the extreme, as people in this condition do not surrender their whole basis of subsistence. There is public knowledge as to exactly what the ration consists of, so that every person entitled will demand his full quota from the communal committees. The communes, owing to deficiency in overseas transport, have been undersupplied and in consequence the difficulties with their dependents have been very great and there has thus been sufficient pressure to guarantee that they make no disposals otherwise than in the proper manner.

I can only reiterate that there has been no leakage in our imports worth mentioning and with the measures now taken it seems to me absolutely impossible, and in fact, our men are generally complaining that the new bureau is discovering nothing but creating enormous labor to no purpose. We will, however, maintain it as an additional safeguard to the situation, although I may mention it has caused great difficulties in Belgium and we have had serious resignations from the Belgian committees as the result of feeling created.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 51

Service Note, describing functions of C.R.B. and C.N. Department of Inspection and Control

BRUSSELS, 23 February 1916

The C.R.B. is required to certify that the goods imported by it are distributed to the civil population of Belgium and the North of France, and that the general terms of the undertakings of the German and British authorities are carried out.

For its part, the Comité National must take care that the distribution of food to the population is made in accordance with its instructions, which are inspired by the fundamental rules on which the imports of foodstuffs by the C.R.B. are based.

Finally, the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National must both be assured that the foodstuffs imported are equitably distributed among the whole civil population. With this end in view, both Commissions must insist upon the strict observance of the resolutions agreed upon by common consent.

In order to accomplish its mission, the C.R.B. has established throughout the country a numerous staff. In every province, it has responsible representatives empowered to see that the obligations imposed upon it are rigorously observed.

These representatives are to be sufficiently informed of the conditions governing the mission of the C.R.B., so as to enable them to certify that they have been regularly carried out. They must see that any irregularities are rectified, and call the attention of the Central Office of the C.R.B. in Brussels, through its Inspection and Control Department, to any violation of the terms of the guarantees.

In order to avoid irregularities in the distribution of foodstuffs, the Comité National has instituted for its part a Controlling Service in every province. The Provincial Controlling Services, each consisting of a Controller in Chief, Head of the Service, and his Assistants, exercise a general supervision over the Local Committees in the District of the province assigned to them.

In addition to and supplementing the Provincial Controlling Services, the Comité National has inaugurated an independent General Inspection Service. This Service superintends every Controlling Service in the province, to make sure that the rules and instructions of the C.N. are fully observed.

The result of the present organization is that the C.R.B. and the C.N. centralize in Brussels, each for its part, the control of the whole country: the C.R.B. through its Director, and the C.N. by means of its Executive Committee.

The Heads of the C.R.B. and of the Comité National, being now convinced that the purpose aimed at by their Controlling Services is identical, resolve to render this control more effective and more active, by amalgamating the organizations created by them, in order to bring about a more complete co-operation between the two Services.

For this purpose, the Controlling Services of the C.R.B. and of the C.N. in every province will be placed under the direction of

the President of the Provincial Committee, or one of his Delegates, and of a Representative of the C.R.B.

Every failure on the part of the Provincial Committee to take action as outlined by the American Representative of the C.R.B. and the Chief Provincial Controller of the C.N. must be reported to Brussels, where a decision will be taken by the Executive Heads of the C.R.B. and the C.N.

The full responsibility for the general conduct of affairs as well as responsibility for the continuance of irregularities will continue to rest with the Provincial Committee.

The Central Inspection Services in Brussels, both of the C.R.B. and of the C.N, will also be united. This Central Service will be under the direction of the Executive Committee of the C.N. or its Delegate, and of the Director of the C.R.B. or his American Representative delegated for this purpose. These two Delegates will bear the title of Chief of the General Inspection and Control Department. (Each for his respective organism.)

The organization and procedure of this Central Service are subject to regulations drawn up for this purpose. Every modification of these regulations must be taken with the common consent of the Heads of the C.N. and the C.R.B.

DOCUMENT NO. 52

Statement of organization of the Department of Inspection and Control by the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium

BRUSSELS, 23 February 1916

With the assistance of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the Executive Committee of the Comité National, which assures, by its central administration situated in Brussels, the direction of the food supplies of the whole country, acts in the provinces through the medium of the Provincial Committees established in the principal towns of the nine provinces and in Greater Brussels. In their turn, the Provincial Committees, who assume the provincial direction of the food supplies, act through the medium of District Committees, and these latter by Communal Committees established in every locality of the country.

The goods are sent in accordance with the instructions of the Comité National, to the Provincial Committees, who distribute them to the District Committees. These latter distribute them to all the localities under their control.

The Communal Committees receive the goods and deliver them to the consumers. It is therefore the Committees established in the communes who alone are in touch with the consumers.

The provisions are distributed between the Provincial Committees, the District Committees, and finally the Local Committees, in accordance with the requirements of the province, the district, or the commune, respectively.

With regard to the distribution direct to the consumers this is done by allowance, i.e., each person can only obtain a single ration

of provisions, either a daily ration, as is the case with bread, or once a fortnight or once a month when it is a question of other provisions, such as bacon, lard, maize, beans, peas, rice, etc.

These distributions must be made in accordance with the instructions of the Comité National, instructions inspired by fundamental rules upon which the importation of foodstuffs into Belgium are based, and by resolutions decided upon, in conjunction with the Commission for Relief in Belgium, for guaranteeing the satisfactory working of the Food Supplies.

In order to assure the smooth working of an undertaking of this importance, it was necessary to appeal to the good will of all those who offered their services to the Comité National. The organization, which everyone, moreover, considered as temporary, could not be perfect. The situation continuing, it became necessary to complete these means by a service controlling the operations of the Local Committees, which, as aforesaid, distributed the food to the consumers. From the beginning of 1915, on the advice of the Comité National, the Provincial Committees organized for their respective provinces a Superintendence Service similar to that in force by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

In the course of the year, the Comité National sent an expert accountant to visit the Provincial Committees in order to make himself acquainted with the working of these Committees and establish uniformity in the keeping of their books.

When, about the month of October 1915, the Comité National were advised of certain little irregularities in the distribution of the provisions, new instructions with regard to the control of the Local Committees were given, and it was decided to establish in Brussels a General Superintendence Service for the whole country.

This General Service, the headquarters of which are in Brussels, superintends all the Provincial and Local Committees for the purpose of assuring the execution of the rules and instructions of the Comité National.

We give, as an annex, the organic rules of the General Superintendence Service.

The Service is divided into two Departments, the "Administrative Survey Department" and the "Investigation Department." At the head of each Department is a General Superintendent, whose duty it is to direct the service and the large staff of surveyors attached to it.

The mission of the Administrative Survey Department, as the name implies, is to survey and see that the Provincial and Local Committees are well managed, to satisfy themselves that the instructions of the Comité National are duly carried out, and notably to discover any irregularities which may have been committed in the transactions of Local Committees, more especially with regard to the delivery of goods from their stores and the distribution of them to the inhabitants.

It is the duty of surveyors also, when necessary, to put the Local Committees and managers of stores *au courant* with the instructions of the Comité National, at the same time explaining to them the duties attached to the functions they fulfil.

The Administrative Superintendents send a report of their surveys to the Comité National. In order that their work may be carried out with method and regularity, and that any question, which might be of interest to the Comité National, is not overlooked, they make use, in their tours of inspection, of a list of questions drawn up by the Comité National. Their work, when making their tours of inspection, consists principally of gleaning information on all points raised by the list of questions, and to reply to any questions put to them in accordance with the information gathered on the spot.

In case of need, the surveyors present a supplementary report of their surveys when they consider it necessary to draw the attention of the Committee to a special question.

The list of questions and the reports of the surveyors are examined by the General Superintendent, who informs the different Departments of the Comité National, "Assistance," "Foodstuffs," or "Secretary's Office," of the matters which specially concern them.

Each of these departments deals with the matters affecting them and gives the necessary instructions to the Provincial Committees with a view to remedy the irregularities noted.

Should serious matters come to light which necessitate the application of repressive justice they are deferred to the Belgian Courts. From that moment they are out of the hands of the Comité National.

Judiciary decisions will be posted up in all premises occupied by the Comité National and by Provincial and Local Committees.

If the facts ascertained lead to the conclusion that illicit acts have been committed by certain persons attached to the Committees or otherwise, but that insufficient proof exists to justify the immediate intervention of the Courts, then the rôle of the Investigation Department comes into play.

The Investigation Department is directed by a special General Superintendent, assisted in Brussels and in the provinces by a large staff of agents whose services we have been able to secure, and who are specially qualified to follow up such inquiries. This Department is in constant communication with the Public Prosecutor.

The agents make inquiries, shadow suspected persons, and look after the transport of the goods. The Public Prosecutor, whenever he deems it necessary, orders the seizure of all foodstuffs the origin of which appears suspicious. The effect of these seizures is considerable, for even in cases where no legal proceedings are taken they have a salutary influence upon crimes and other equivocal intermediaries. They upset their calculations and cause them to lose money.

These seizures will inevitably have the result of driving away persons acting in good faith in the interests of agents who have organized the drainage of foodstuffs from Belgium.

When the Comité National took the first steps for organizing this service, they instructed the Provincial Committees to model their organizations of control in accordance with the General Superintendence Service adopted in Brussels, and to add to their administrative control an Investigation Department, with the co-operation of special agents in touch with the Public Prosecutor.

The Provincial Committees have also given instructions to the Local Committees of the larger communes in the country to organize the control of the operations of their stores, their administrative control and their investigations, in such a manner as to guarantee the regular working of these operations, and to survey their business generally, especially from the point of view of the traffic in foodstuffs coming from the stores of the Comité National.

For the purpose of completing this organization of control and investigation, a representative from the Commission for Relief in Belgium will be attached to the General Superintendence Department in Brussels. In like manner, in each province, the representative or representatives of the Commission for Relief in Belgium will collaborate with the Provincial Superintendence.

The collaboration of the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium is indispensable, the more so as the essential mission of the Representatives of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, especially in the provinces, is to see that the provisions imported are employed exclusively for the alimentation of the civil population in Belgium.

We give also, as an annex, No. 3, an order to be posted up in all the premises and stores belonging to the Committees.

This regulation résumés very clearly in a few words the principles of revictualing in Belgium, and the essential duties of the Committees and the inhabitants. . . . .

But Committees are forbidden to anticipate general sanctions, such, for instance, as the refusal to deliver provisions to those who take advantage of the situation and resell the food. It has, therefore, so far only been a question of judiciary sanctions. And even then, in order to put in movement the judicial apparatus, it has been necessary to make each head of the family who received provisions sign a declaration by which he binds himself to conform to the rule of the Comité National, and not to resell the goods which he receives. Acting upon the advice of jurisconsults attached to the Committees, and in accord with the Public Prosecutor in Brussels, we have had inscribed on the householders' cards the text of this declaration, by virtue of which each holder of a card, i.e., all persons who are supplied, undertake themselves to consume, in their own households, the provisions which they receive. As a result of this declaration, the sale of goods coming from the stores of the Comité National constitutes an infraction of the engagement subscribed to by the holder of the card, and may give rise to legal proceedings.

The permanent and active control of the Local Committees, as they are organized, will no doubt have the result of assuring a suitable allowance for the population, and will prevent the Local Committees from selling foodstuffs to dealers. On the other hand, the judiciary investigations and the legal proceedings, taken against indelicate consumers and suspicious intermediaries, the seizure of goods, and the eventual condemnations which will follow, will have the effect, as far as it is possible, of stamping out the dubious traffic which has been going on in connection with our stores.

8. *Responsibilities and Duties of the Commission Redefined. February–December 1916*

Not long after the establishment of the Department of Inspection and Control it became apparent to members of the Commission that the part they had been forced to play under the new arrangement did not have the full approval of some of the officials of the Belgian organization. Document 53 and those that follow show what happened when Hoover suggested the possibility of turning over to the Belgians the responsibility that had been borne by the Americans.

DOCUMENT NO. 53

Letter, Hoover to Page, *suggesting that the time may have arrived for turning over to the C.N. all the functions of the C.R.B.*

London, 24 February 1916

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

I have recently had several conferences with my American associates in regard to the general situation of Belgian relief work, and we have together reached the conclusion that the time has arrived when the Allied Governments should consider whether it is not possible for them to transfer to a Belgian organization the guarantees and responsibilities which we have thus far carried and enable us to withdraw from the work without thereby entailing any hardship or suffering upon the Belgian civil population; the presence of the leading spirits in the Comité National in London seems to offer an appropriate moment for raising the question.

As you will remember, the Commission for Relief in Belgium was initiated in your office on October 4th, 1914, to meet a very critical emergency and supply food to the Belgian civil population. At that time the country was in a terribly disorganized and demoralized condition. The occupied territory was entirely deprived of the ordinary facilities for transportation, communication and travel, and the Belgians could not hope to effect an adequate organization for themselves. It was, therefore, essential that some neutral agency, possessed of liberty of movement and freedom from the severe measures imposed upon a conquered people should undertake the initial work and bring order out of the reigning chaos.

Thanks to the devoted services of a large corps of American volunteers and to our diplomatic representatives, we were able to build up an organization which has grown steadily in efficiency, and have been able to meet the conditions imposed by the Allied Governments and carry out the guarantees which we have assumed from time to time.

Conditions of life in Belgium have materially improved since the beginning of our work, and the Belgians themselves now enjoy a larger liberty of movement than at any time since the war began, and as their freedom of movement has increased they have taken a larger share in the work and in the relations with the German authorities. When the work began, it was, of course, utterly out of the question to expect the Belgians to create and perfect the necessary organization; now that it has been perfected—so far as seems possible under the abnormal conditions which exist—there would seem to be no inherent reason to prevent the Belgians from assuming entire control of the work and carrying it on. This would enable the members of the Commission to bring their activities to a close, with the assurance that the Belgian people, in whom they take so friendly an interest, would not suffer by the cessation of their labors, and it would at the same time leave us free, individually and collectively, to turn our efforts in other directions where there is need for our activities and such abilities as we may possess.

I know that it is unnecessary for me to tell you that neither I nor my associates would for one moment consider the step I have proposed were it to involve the cessation of the work which has gone on so far. We have considered for some time, however, that the original and imperative need for our continued efforts no longer exists, and in August last I proposed to the Comité National an arrangement by which they could take over the entire work. Yielding to their urgent request at that time I consented to continue, but it now seems to me that an occasion has arisen when we may again broach the subject without fear of endangering the relief of the Belgian people.

I attach hereto, for your information, copy of the memorandum which was drawn up at the time by the Comité National.

The work of the Commission has consisted of two parts: (1) The purchase, shipment, and distribution of food under conditions that ensure the carrying out of the guarantees given by the several belligerent governments. (2) The financial management of the work.

Our original appeal for help made throughout the world was met by the most generous response, but it soon became evident that the task was far too great for private philanthropy alone; it was necessary to secure financial aid on so large a scale that nothing less than the most generous governmental assistance could provide for our work. Subsequently, several governments granted subsidies, and financial arrangements were made which have met our requirements and which must continue to meet all requirements for the work so long as it may be necessary.

The carrying out of the guarantees and the necessary negotiations with the several governments regarding the food distribution can, I conceive, be done by the Belgians. While the relief of the occupied French territory does not primarily concern the Belgians, no doubt this work could also be included under the Comité National.

As for the financial responsibility, I can at any moment make an accounting to every government that has contributed to the funds of the Commission and make such disposal of remaining funds as

each government may desire. I shall make the same disposal of funds contributed by private organizations.

It may interest you to know that we have received from all sources over £20,000,000 up to date.

Since the name of the "Commission for Relief in Belgium" is bound up with the financial responsibility which my associates and I have assumed, we should expect to dissolve the Commission upon our withdrawal and should also expect that the work in future be carried on by the Comité National; in other words, the affairs of the Commission for Relief in Belgium will be completely liquidated and it will cease to exist.

I would, therefore, be grateful if you would present this matter to the interested governments and ascertain whether they would be prepared to transfer the guarantees and responsibilities to the Comité National in such a manner as to ensure the continued feeding of and relief of the Belgian civil population, so that my associates and I may conscientiously withdraw from the great work in which we have been privileged to play a part during the past sixteen months.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 54

Letter, FRANCQUI TO PAGE, *asserting the absolute dependence of relief on the continuance of the C.R.B.*

LONDON, 26 February 1916

To His Excellency the Honorable Walter Hines Page
American Ambassador, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

Mr. Hoover presented to me yesterday evening a copy of the letter which he addressed to Your Excellency on the 24th inst. In this communication Mr. Hoover expresses the wish to dissolve the Commission for Relief in Belgium, for which he suggested substituting the Comité National of Belgium.

Your Excellency, who has, for the last eighteen months, given your kind support to the humanitarian work undertaken by the Commission for Relief in Belgium, knows better than anyone with what disinterestedness, what devotion, your compatriots have come to the aid of the Belgian population. You know also that without the active leadership of Mr. Hoover it would have been absolutely impossible for us to continue the provisioning and assistance of the Belgians; also you will not be astonished when I insist, not only in my own personal name, but also in the name of my colleagues and in that of all my fellow-countrymen, that Your Excellency should use your kind influence on Mr. Hoover that he should abandon the idea set out in his letter of the 24th inst.

The harmony which has never ceased to exist between the C.R.B. and the organization that I direct in Belgium is today too intimate to allow of any blow being struck at either without the risk of destroying the whole organization of both. Also I feel obliged to inform Your Excellency that it would be impossible for me to continue for one moment without the co-operation of Mr. Hoover to carry on the work which he and I have assumed.

I also wish to inform Your Excellency that the sole object for which the C.R.B. and the Comité National were created was for the provisioning and *secours* of the Belgian population, and I would add that Mr. Hoover and I have always seen that the organizations over which we preside have not exceeded their privileges and have abstained entirely and scrupulously from any action of political significance of any kind.

In the name of the Belgian population I repeat to Your Excellency all the grateful feelings for the inestimable services you have been kind enough to render.

I beg to remain, etc., etc., etc.

(Signed) E. FRANCQUI

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 55

Letter,[15] GREY *to* VILLALOBAR, *declining to accept certain German proposals and asserting that Hoover is the only person directly and personally responsible to the British Government for the whole relief work both inside and outside of Belgium*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
28 February 1916

MY DEAR MINISTER:

I have the honour to enclose in the form of a memorandum, my reply to the propositions emanating from the German authorities in Belgium, which you, together with Baron Lambert and Monsieur Francqui, were good enough to present to me on February 24th.

I am anxious that you should realise the gratitude and appreciation with which His Majesty's Government regard the services which you, in concert with your United States and Netherlands colleagues, have rendered to the population in Belgium in protecting and furthering the work of relief. Your action in coming to London at, I fear, great inconvenience to yourself, in order to represent the needs of this work, is in accordance with all I have learnt of your interest and energy in this matter.

I regret, therefore, the more sincerely that I should be obliged to demur absolutely to so many points in the arrangement which you have striven so hard to obtain. These are, however, matters of prin-

[15] For memorandum accompanying this letter see chapter iii, Document 77.

ciple, on which it is impossible for His Majesty's Government to accept any compromise. Compromise would indeed be incompatible with their duty alike to their own and to the Belgian people, and I can only trust that you, representing in your official capacity a great neutral nation, as you represent in your private capacity a work of charity in which the British people feel so keen an interest, will be able to secure action on the part of the German authorities more in accordance with the rights of nations and the duties of humanity than those conditionally promised in Baron von der Lancken's letter of February 16th.

I am transmitting a copy of this letter to the United States and Spanish Ambassadors and the Netherlands Minister at this capital, to whom, with yourself and your colleagues at Brussels, His Majesty's Government look as intermediaries in this work, as well as to the Belgian Minister, who is so nearly interested, and to Mr. Hoover, with whom I am obliged to deal in close co-operation in all such matters, he being, in his capacity as head of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the only person directly and personally responsible for the manner in which the whole work, both inside and outside Belgium, is carried on. If I may express one further hope, it is that all parties concerned in this matter, realising the impossibility of holding personally responsible either the diplomatic representatives of neutral Powers or the citizens of a noble and unhappy country under foreign domination, will take into full account the heavy burden of responsibility resting on this great neutral Commission and will in every possible way lighten that burden by making its responsibility as easy to discharge as possible.

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 56

Letter, GREY TO PAGE, *declaring the C.R.B. to be the only organization capable of assuming responsibility for relief activities both inside and outside of Belgium and that the C.R.B. must continue its functions or the relief cease*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
13 March 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

I have carefully considered your letter of February 25th enclosing a letter from Mr. Hoover, regarding the possibility of the retirement of the American Commission from the direction of the relief work in Belgium.

I quite appreciate the desire of the Commission to divest themselves of the burden entailed by this work, which they have borne for so long, but I must state clearly that His Majesty's Government can only allow the work of relief to continue if the entire responsibility for it both inside and outside Belgium is borne by neutrals who, having complete freedom to come and go, and having no official

position limiting their personal liability, can in fact be held responsible for the carrying out of the various conditions upon which His Majesty's Government have insisted. The American Commission is the only organisation which fulfils these requirements, and His Majesty's Government therefore feel obliged to insist that either the whole work should cease or the American Commission shall continue to direct it as heretofore.

I shall be glad if you will convey these observations to Mr. Hoover, and ask him to reconsider his views in the light of these contributions.

Believe me, my dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 57

Letter, GREY TO PAGE, *giving assurance of continued co-operation between the British Government and the Commission*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
16 May 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

In your private note of March 23d last you were good enough to send me a copy of a letter from Mr. Hoover stating that the Commission for Relief in Belgium would be willing to continue their work of relieving the civil population of Belgium. In the last paragraph of his letter Mr. Hoover observes that it is hopeless to carry on this work without the daily co-operation of various departments and agencies of His Majesty's Government, and he says that, in agreeing to continue, it is on the clear understanding that this co-operation shall continue also.

I think that the Commission may perhaps desire to receive some assurance from His Majesty's Government on this point, and I therefore beg that you will be so good as to make it clear to Mr. Hoover and those associated with him in this great humanitarian work that it is the desire and intention of His Majesty's Government that various public departments connected with the work should co-operate with the Commission in the closest possible way.

I am happy to be able to say that the Commission continue to enjoy the complete confidence of His Majesty's Government, and I should like to add my own personal tribute to the admirable organisation which they have evolved, and to the tireless energy of all its members, who are so devotedly carrying out their difficult task.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 58

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *reviewing the origin of Belgian relief and the C.R.B. reiterating the sole responsibility of the C.R.B., and by implication declining to accept reorganization proposals originating in Belgium*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
15 July 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have received your letter of June 30th, and have submitted it to my superiors for consideration. Leaving for separate treatment the various points raised in the first part of your letter, I am now directed to make to you the following observations on the question of the organisation of the relief work in Belgium itself. (The Relief work in Northern France has been the subject of a separate memorandum.)

In view of Monsieur Francqui's memorandum, it is desirable to set out again clearly the conditions and expectations of His Majesty's Government. You will remember that when the first application was received from various Belgians for permits to import foodstuffs into Belgium in the months of September and October 1914, His Majesty's Government laid it down as an absolute rule that no such imports could be countenanced or permitted unless the foodstuffs were imported as the property, and distributed under the direction and control, of neutrals. Thereupon the services of the American Ambassador were enlisted, and His Majesty's Government, on the recommendation of Dr. Page, recognised the "American Relief Committee" and its successor the "Commission for Relief in Belgium" as suitable to undertake this sole responsibility. His Majesty's Government have continued to give undivided support to your organisation since that time. The various Belgian committees subsequently developed into the Comité National and its branches and this organisation with its members has shown admirable devotion and powers of organisation in developing the work. Unfortunately, all these gentlemen and their organisation are subject to the control of the enemies of the Allies, and, in spite of the high confidence which they enjoy, it is therefore utterly impossible for His Majesty's Government to reply upon them to bear the responsibilities for the conduct of the relief work in Belgium which you, not they, have assumed toward us. But His Majesty's Government have relied and do rely upon them, as Allies of this country possessing the same interests as this country, to give every help to the Commission for Relief in Belgium in its task, so far as the German authorities will allow them to do so, and it is obvious that upon them must rest the detailed labour of distribution. It seems scarcely necessary to repeat to you the various stipulations to this effect in the notes addressed from time to time by His Majesty's Government to the American and Spanish Ambassadors; but in this connection you should bear in mind particularly the notes addressed by Sir Edward Grey to the American Ambassador on June 17th, 1915,

to the Marquis de Villalobar on February 28th, 1915, and to the American Ambassador on March 13th, 1916. In these notes it is repeatedly set out that the whole foundation and condition upon which these imports are to continue is that the undivided responsibility for the importation and distribution of the foodstuffs and money should rest solely upon the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the members of which, as neutrals, have freedom to come and go, and, having no official position limiting their personal liability, can in effect be held responsible for carrying out the various conditions upon which His Majesty's Government have been obliged to insist.

Having regard to these duties which His Majesty's Government consider are imposed on the Commission for Relief in Belgium, there would seem to be in Belgium a lack of real appreciation of the conditions which have been laid down by His Majesty's Government and of the constant vigilance which is necessary to carry them out. It may therefore be worth while to review these conditions, with the suggestion that this communication should be forwarded not only to the Comité National but to each of the provincial and other subsidiary committees for their information and guidance.

a) The Commission for Relief in Belgium should transport into Belgium the quantities and classes of foodstuffs fixed by the Allied Governments, and these foodstuffs must remain the property of the Commission for Relief in Belgium until they are delivered by the Communal Committees to the final consumer—that is, all foodstuffs in warehouses, whether provincial, regional, or communal, shall remain the property of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and all such warehouses shall be administered under their authority and control—as in no other manner can His Majesty's Government conceive that there can be adequate protection for the large stocks of food accumulated in Belgium.

b) The Commission for Relief in Belgium must maintain in Belgium an entirely independent organisation, with its own directors and managers responsible directly to its Chairman in London, and with a sufficient staff to ensure adequate representation throughout Belgium. This is the independent duty of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, although His Majesty's Government have no doubt as to the loyal co-operation of the Comité National in matters of detailed distribution.

c) The Commission for Relief in Belgium with the assistance of the Comité National must see to it that the guarantees entered into by the German authorities are strictly adhered to in all their aspects.

d) As His Majesty's Government indirectly, and many British subjects directly, contribute large sums to the support of the work, they must insist that it is the duty of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to satisfy itself independently that all the foodstuffs imported and acquired are distributed with justice and equality over the entire civil population, and that at all times, inside as well as outside Belgium, proper expenditure is made of these moneys and of all sums realised from the sale of foodstuffs in Belgium. "Ravitaillement" and "secours" are interdependent parts of the same operation. Your responsibilities extend to both, because the German

guarantees extend to both, and there can and must be no separation between the two.

e) Apart from these entirely independent functions it would appear to His Majesty's Government that the Belgian in Belgium should be glad to have the co-operation of the Americans in all phases of the relief work. A memorandum of agreement between the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National, dated July 20th, 1915, submitted to His Majesty's Government, appeared to provide a basis of amicable understanding between the two organisations, that is, in general, that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should maintain an independent organisation in Belgium responsible to its Chairman, that members of the American organisation should be active members of the Executive Committees of the Comité National, that representatives of the staff of the Commission for Relief in Belgium should be actual members of the executive provincial committees, that all questions of broad internal policy were to be settled between the two organisations, and that the accountants of the Commission for Relief in Belgium should audit the accounts of the Comité National.

Since this memorandum of agreement was adopted it appears that two additions have been made to the scheme of joint organisation in order to guarantee the proper efficient working of the entire organisation: (1) The establishment of Bureaux Statistiques in order to supply from time to time data with regard to the food distributed; and (2) The establishment of a Department of Inspection and Control under the joint direction of representatives of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National.

His Majesty's Government must request that any opposition arising as to the executions of the functions of these two Bureaux be promptly reported by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Generally they must insist that the infractions of guarantees which come to the knowledge of the Commission for Relief in Belgium or the Comité National should either at once be taken up directly with the local German authorities or, if no remedy be found, that they shall be reported at regular intervals to the American and Spanish Ministers in Brussels who have so long acted as trustees for the guarantees, so as to afford them a proper basis for intervention with the German authorities on the working of the guarantees and to enable them to give their assurances to His Majesty's Government. While there are undoubted advantages in centralising these complaints of infractions through the Chairman of the Comité National to the Ministers or through the chairmen of the provincial committees to the local German authorities, it is essential that the American Director of the Commission or his representatives should be in agreement as regards all such presentations, so that the Commission for Relief in Belgium can independently assure His Majesty's Government that such infractions have been duly taken up and remedy found.

In conclusion we wish to make it entirely clear that this insistence on your independent duties of administration and control is no reflection upon the efficiency or good will of the Belgian organisa-

tion, in which the Allied Governments have entire confidence. The sole object of His Majesty's Government, which can only be secured in the manner above outlined, is to maintain the distinctively neutral character of this work, which alone enables neutral opinion to be enlisted wholeheartedly and energetically in its support, and to relieve the Belgians themselves of responsibilities which, in their present circumstances, could only compromise such liberty of action as they still enjoy and endanger their safety.

Yours sincerely

23464 (Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 59

Letter, GREY TO PAGE, *setting forth a precise definition of the C.R.B. in relief of Belgium*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
20 October 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

I have carefully considered Your Excellency's request, made, I understand, on behalf of Mr. Whitlock, for a precise definition of the responsibilities of the Commission for Relief in Belgium with regard to the distribution of foodstuffs and monies arising therefrom in the occupied areas of Belgium and Northern France. Although these responsibilities have been set out from time to time during the last two years in communications addressed to Your Excellency and to the Commission, I will endeavor to review the matter for Mr. Whitlock's guidance in the light not only of the original engagements but also of experience gained during these two years of operation. I will on this occasion confine myself to the questions arising in the occupied portions of Belgium leaving for separate treatment the arrangements with regard to the occupied portions of Northern France.

(2) Your Excellency will remember that when the first applications were received from various Belgians for permits to import foodstuffs into Belgium in the months of September and October, 1914, His Majesty's Government laid it down as an absolute rule that no such imports could be introduced or permitted unless the foodstuffs were imported and properly distributed by and under the direction and control of neutrals, and for many reasons Americans were marked out as the neutrals best able to undertake the task in a manner satisfactory both to His Majesty's Government and the Belgian Government. The services of Your Excellency were enlisted, and through the good offices of the United States Government, the approval of the German Government in Berlin was secured for the importation and distribution of foodstuffs under the conditions laid down.

(3) His Majesty's Government, upon the recommendation of Your Excellency, at that time recognised the American Relief Committee

under Mr. Hoover, and later on, its successor, the Commission for Relief in Belgium, as suitable to undertake this responsibility. It was agreed that the Commission should act under the patronage and protection of Your Excellency in London and of the United States Minister in Brussels, and shortly afterwards the Spanish Ambassador in London and the Spanish Minister in Brussels, the United States Ambassadors in Berlin and in Paris, the United States Minister at The Hague, and the Netherlands Minister at Le Havre were induced to extend their patronage and protection to the Commission. His Majesty's Government were informed by the Belgian representatives that they would co-operate fully and loyally with the Commission for Relief in Belgium and would assist them in the distribution of foodstuffs and relief. At a later stage, we were informed that for this purpose the various Belgian Committees had been grouped into a unified organisation known as the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, and His Majesty's Government assumed that the organisation thus formed was to be regarded simply as a distribution agency of the Commission for Relief. I wish at this point to state, generally and distinctly, that His Majesty's Government see no reason to alter their original attitude that the whole foundation and condition upon which the imports can continue is that the undivided responsibility for the importation of foodstuffs, the control over their distribution, and the allocation of the monies arising therefrom shall be vested solely in the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

(4) I will endeavor to set out in even more detail the reasons why His Majesty's Government find it necessary to insist on this relationship and responsibility, but I wish first to make it quite clear that this insistence is in no sense a reflection upon the Belgian gentlemen so nobly engaged in the relief of their countrymen. His Majesty's Government fully appreciate the devotion and ability which the personnel of the Comité National has shewn under circumstances of the most extraordinary difficulty. They are convinced that the structure of the Communal, Regional, Provincial, Special, and National Committees is essential to the detailed distribution of the relief. Unfortunately all these gentlemen and their organisation and property are subject to the control of enemies of the Allies and, despite the high confidence they enjoy, it is not only impossible for His Majesty's Government to rely upon them to bear the responsibilities assumed towards the Allies by the Commission for Relief, but also contrary to the interests of their Belgian fellow-countrymen that they should attempt to do so. His Majesty's Government have relied and do rely upon them to appreciate the anomalous situation and peculiar necessities of the time. Having, as they are known to have, the best interests of their countrymen at heart, they will assuredly be willing to renounce for the time being those independent functions to which their abilities and nationality would otherwise entitle them, and devote their energies to the loyal assistance of the neutral Commission in its onerous task.

(5) It seems obvious that only a neutral organisation under the powerful protection which the Commission for Relief in Belgium enjoys, could have been or can be in a position to make agreements

of a binding character with belligerent governments and officials, and to secure the fulfilment of those agreements. Such agreements made either with the approval of the Patron Ministers or by them on behalf of the Commission must be supported, not only by the influence of the neutral governments involved, but also by public opinion in belligerent as well as neutral countries. Such agreements, if made on behalf of a Belgian committee under present political conditions, would have no such support, either from neutral governments or public opinion, and His Majesty's Government cannot therefore accept any substitution of the Comité National for the Commission for Relief in Belgium in such agreements.

(6) His Majesty's Government do not conceive that the vast quantities of money and foodstuffs required can be protected in overseas transport and internal distribution unless they are the absolute property and under the absolute control and administration of such a body of neutrals; and the responsibility of this body must extend to the maintenance of a distributing organisation of such character as shall in itself minimise the possibility of leakage.

(7) Again, the neutral membership of the Commission, in Belgium, gives it a freedom of movement and action, an independence from political and personal pressure, and consequently an ability on the part of its members to control and direct administration, which no Belgian could today assume in the occupied territory. And it is only through a daily participation in and control over the administration by such neutrals that the Patron Ministers will be able to give the assurances to the various Governments involved as to the daily compliance of the various parties with the undertakings on which the work of relief is founded.

(8) Beyond this, again, it is a fact inherent in any military government imposed on territories occupied by force of arms, that there can be no expectation of rigid justice and fidelity in the distribution of relief, whether of food or money, unless the administration of the whole work is participated in at every point and absolutely controlled by an independent neutral body such as the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

(9) The Commission for Relief in Belgium has submitted to His Majesty's Government from time to time, for their approval, various memoranda settled by them with the Comité National as to their mutual relations, to which we have been compelled to take some exceptions. With regard to our views generally upon these arrangements, I think it is desirable to lay down the following principles to which all such arrangements must conform:

a) The Commission must maintain in Belgium an entirely independent organisation, composed of responsible and capable Directors and Managers, responsible directly to the Chairman of the Commission and numerous enough to secure the adequate representation of the Commission and the execution of its duties throughout Belgium. Whilst in a general way the Comité National and its component sub-committees must of necessity bear the labour of the detailed distribution, both it and its component committees must act as the agent of and on behalf of the Commission. The cooperation of the Comité National with the Commission in this par-

ticular would seem to have been obtained by the arrangements entered into, by which all matters of general policy should be settled in conference between the two organisations, while joint consideration in matters of administration should be secured by the Commission maintaining several neutral members upon the Executive Committees of the Comité National and upon the Executives of the Provincial and Special Committees. It obviously follows that all administrative decisions must be made by these Executive Committees and that the views of the Commission's representatives thereon must be given the weight which their great responsibilities demand.

b) The Commission for Relief in Belgium must itself purchase the foodstuffs and transport them into Belgium within the quantities fixed by the Allied Governments, and these foodstuffs must remain the absolute property of the Commission until they are delivered by the Communal Committees, to the final consumer, i.e., all foodstuffs in warehouses, whether Provincial, Regional, or Communal, must remain the property of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and all such warehouses, in and out of Belgium, are to be designated as the property of the Commission and to be administered under its name and authority by its own officers or by the Comité National as its administrative agents, for in no other manner do His Majesty's Government believe that adequate protection can be secured for the large stocks of food accumulated in Belgium. Moreover, as large quantities of foodstuffs are sold in Belgium and the monies realised therefrom are applied to the department of "Secours," His Majesty's Government require that the responsibility of the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall, in the same manner and for similar reasons, extend to the handling of these monies no less than to the distribution of food, the various branches of the Comité National acting in this matter also as agents of the Commission in its name and with its full knowledge and consent.

c) Apart from these arrangements for the administration and protection of foodstuffs and money, His Majesty's Government must insist on the general and independent responsibility of the Commission to see that such form of organisation and distribution shall be maintained as will secure that all foodstuffs and relief shall be distributed and administered with justice and equity and shall reach their destination with the minimum possible risk of leakage. As a necessary condition of the continuance of imports, the Commission either directly or through its Patron Ministers, must be able to certify that the agreements and undertakings made on all sides, providing for the non-interference of all authorities with the collection and distribution of foodstuffs and monies arising therefrom, are carried out in good faith, and obviously the Belgian committees will share and co-operate in the enforcement of these guarantees to the fullest extent of their power.

d) In the accomplishment of these objects, His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance to the Bureau of Inspection and Control, which must independently satisfy itself that the whole relief organisation is functioning properly in all the particulars above set out. This bureau must be maintained, either solely under the control of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, or, preferably,

jointly in co-operation with the Comité National. And furthermore, the Commission must continue, both in and out of Belgium, the Bureau of Audit, under independent Accountants, who shall from time to time audit the essential accounts of the whole relief organisation; also a Bureau of Statistics, which shall be in a position to supply to the Protecting Ministers adequate data as to the food collection, transport, and distribution.

(10) It would appear to His Majesty's Government that there can be nothing in these stipulations with which the Belgians in Belgium should be unwilling to comply. As already emphasised, they represent no reflection upon the efficiency and good will of the Belgian Committees or their membership. The sole object of His Majesty's Government is to maintain intact the distinctively neutral character of this work which alone enables neutral effort abroad to be enlisted energetically and whole-heartedly in its support. This can clearly only be secured in the manner outlined above. Beyond this, it appears to His Majesty's Government that the assumption by the Belgian committees of separate responsibilities towards any of the authorities or any independent action on their part, could only compromise and endanger their members, and I must again repeat that on no other conditions than those laid down above can His Majesty's Government permit food importations into Belgium.

(11) I shall be glad if Your Excellency will communicate the above to the principal members of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and, through your colleagues in Brussels, to the principal members of the Belgian Committees in Belgium, and I shall be glad to receive your assurance that the above principles are fully understood and that the whole organisation is conducted upon these lines.

Believe me, my dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) Grey of Fallodon

DOCUMENT NO. 60

Letter, Hoover to Percy, *replying to the latter's observation on the violation of German guarantees and his inquiry concerning the working of the Bureau of Inspection and Control*

London, 30 June 1916

Lord Eustace Percy,
The Foreign Office, London

Dear Lord Eustace:

I beg to acknowledge your various letters of the 28th and 29th of June. I will, of course, take up in Belgium the many matters which you raise. I do think, however, that I should set out at some length some factors in the position in relation also to your verbal inquiries.

I. In sending you copies of the weekly statement of investigations I was actuated by a desire to place before you the whole internal

working of the organization, fully and frankly, hoping to convince you that the inspection and control were carried out rigorously and that consequential irregularities were fully pursued. As I pointed out at that time, I did so with fear that the great number of incidents which these documents displayed would give you a wholly distorted view as to the situation in Belgium. If you will bear in mind the many committees and daily transactions in the country and the fineness of the comb which we draw through it, I think you will agree with me that the matters raised can quite well be left to their normal solution. The great number of incidents related may be divided into three categories:

a) A large part of the incidents refer to irregularities in distribution amongst the civil population, which is purely a matter of internal organization, and, while it concerns us as an organization, it does not come into the range of the guarantees.

b) You will note the entire absence of incident in relation to seizure of imported foodstuffs by the Germans.

c) Practically the whole of the incidents of violation revolve around the interpretation of the provisions in the guarantees as to individual purchases and to export of excess early vegetables, with the exception of the fats question, which is under negotiation.

In practically all these incidents at least colorable right may be claimed by the German authorities and we have taken the view that if we put up complaints, while it will be impossible for us to get the return of the actual commodity involved, the steady presentation of a stream of complaints keeps down violation. There is no doubt in our mind as to the desire of the central authorities in Brussels to see the guarantees carried out properly, and it seems to us that it will be sufficient to keep them up to the mark if we report to them all the incidents which occur in the country through the laxity of local administration.

The matters of which you complain will be gone into still further to the best of our ability; but you will, I think, recognize that there is a limit to what can be done and that we are certainly protecting 99.9 per cent of the total native food supply of the country at the present moment.

II. In the matter of further information as to the constitution and method of handling the Bureau of Inspection and Control and the pursuit of irregularities to the German authorities, I beg to say the following is the situation:

The Bureau of Inspection and Control was set up early last winter in response to your demands for more rigorous control by the Americans. It was constituted as a joint measure between the C.R.B. and the C.N. to be presided over by an American representing the C.R.B. and a Belgian representing the C.N., both acting under the respective directors. The gentlemen chosen were Messrs. van Gend and Green. Subsidiary bureaus were to be established in each province to be presided over jointly by an American representative of the C.R.B. and a Belgian representative of the C.N. The provincial bureaus were to maintain their own staffs of inspectors and to investigate in great detail the whole of the operations of the communal committees. The Central Bureau of Inspection and

Control also has its own independent inspectors in conjunction with the provincial inspectors, who investigate any complaints coming up to the central organization, the idea being that the Central Inspection Bureau overriding the whole, would keep the provincial bureaus stimulated up to efficiency. In working out the details of installation of this organization, a considerable amount of difficulty has been encountered, as one or two of the provincial committees resented it as in some manner a reflection upon their administration; and both Mr. Francqui and Mr. Poland have experienced a great deal of personal difficulty in obtaining its acceptance and loyal support. To the best of my belief the provincial committee of Brabant, which you mentioned, is the only one which has not fallen entirely into line. You will recognize that any organization of this type which is made up of volunteers of all kinds of personalities requires a great deal of care and patience, and the Relief direction in Brussels has succeeded in overcoming all opposition of this character, except, possibly, in the cases you allude to. I do not think we are warranted in cutting off the entire food supply to this province at present, but no doubt if they do not promptly and loyally co-operate at an early date we could, if you insist, do so.

With regard to your inquiries as to whether this bureau covers the question of forced labor, I beg to say that the inspection and control in general embraces both ravitaillement and secours, and under the latter the labor question arises. The Belgian people very naturally consider that in all departments where they are expending money remitted by their own Government, the Americans have no voice. Therefore, Mr. Green's departmental activities have been restricted to the ravitaillement questions; in fact the secours side of the inspection and control is conducted in an entirely separate office. The phases arising out of the Caisse de Prêts, which you mention, are on the secours side and therefore are not within our present province.

Given that irregularities *vis-à-vis* the guarantees are discovered and investigated, they are, together with the data thereon, referred to Mr. Francqui, who draws up a weekly note in summary, which he presents to the ministers to be presented to the German authorities. Latterly the provincial presidents have been instructed, after consultation with the American representatives, to take up the irregularities arising in the province, in the first instance with the local German Governor, with a view to effecting a quicker solution so that the central establishment shall only need to deal with such issues as cannot locally be settled.

III. As to the Étape, the situation here is very difficult. As you can imagine, in the midst of a fighting army the Germans are not willing to have persons of any nationality circulating freely through the country for fear that they should be the bearers of communications. We took up with the German General Staff on my last visit the question of establishing another American station in this area, and I am in hopes that this can be brought to a speedy fruition. Most of the complaints to which you refer took place in the southwestern section of the Étape, our people having a much freer movement in the half to the north and east.

IV. As to the question about how far the C.R.B. is maintaining an independent control in Belgium, I beg to enclose herewith copy of a memorandum prepared by Mr. Francqui. The Belgian people having built up, under most terrible difficulties, a strong institution in the shape of the Comité National, they have a natural desire that it should be steadily and sytematically held to the forefront as a rallying point of Belgian sentiment and solidarity, and that its brilliance should not be diminished by a parallel and too prominent a foreign institution. The most extreme form of such development would be the total elimination of the Americans from Belgium, which I do not believe is at all intended. The question as to how far it is necessary for us to maintain an independent organization under independent direction revolves, so far as you are concerned, largely around the question of guarantees. Certain other questions enter into it but lie outside the international phases. At the early stages of the organization in Belgium the Americans performed certain functions outside relief which do not at the present moment loom so large. But as the C.N. has grown in influence and strength within the country and as life has settled down to more or less routine and settled relations with the Germans, this function is not so important as it was at one time.

The whole desire of the Americans is simply to serve the Belgians and above all to carry on this service on an amiable footing whereby no possible friction can result, and I am anxious to agree with Mr. Francqui in the desirability, from the standpoint above expressed, of entirely subordinating the C.R.B. organization in Belgium to the C.N. and to do so with your full approval. Always bear in mind that this is not a business of personal *amour propre;* that we do not care an atom what position we occupy in the scheme so long as the Belgian people are fed.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 61

Letter, PAGE TO WHITLOCK, *stating the Ambassador's opinion respecting relations of the C.R.B. and C.N. and protesting against interference with the C.R.B.'s discharge of its responsibilities*

LONDON, 23 October 1916

His Excellency, The Honorable Brand Whitlock
American Minister, Brussels

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE:

I send you herewith further copies of the Foreign Office note sent you with my dispatch of the 21st instant with regard to the relations of the Commission for Relief and the Belgian committees. I feel that some observations on my part may be of interest to you in the difficult negotiations which may be necessary to straighten out this situation.

We all recognize here the extreme difficulty of the situation which you have to defend in Belgium. There would seem to be a great demand for labor on your part *vis-à-vis* the authorities without the necessity of troubling the local committees. And I am sure that their lack of perspective does not make matters any easier for you.

Several things are apparent to me with regard to the relief in general: it is unpopular with a large public opinion in the Allied countries on military grounds, and continues its existence against these currents, first, because of the constant assurance that it is an organism of independent neutrals under the patronage of American officials in Europe; second, that any termination of the relief brought about by the action of the Allied Governments would create a storm of adverse public opinion abroad. It is a very delicate thread on which to hang such an organism, and it has only been by the strenuous daily and hourly activity of the Relief Commission itself that these adverse currents are stemmed and the support of public opinion maintained.

In view of the reports which filter out of Belgium daily as to the rigorous subjection of the Belgians to German authority, if it were suggested that the Americans were not the forefront and control of the relief in Belgium itself, the whole thing would break down. The general conception of the relief work is based on the arrangement stipulated at the initial stage by the British Government. This conception has been maintained since the beginning, and any action taken by the Belgians which tends to controvert this will, if it ever gets known, be the death knell of the entire relief.

For eight or nine months the British Government has been filled with anxiety as to whether this was the actual state of the organization, and reports coming out of Belgium through various channels have disclosed to the British Government an attitude of determined independence and assumption of domination by the Belgian committees and the subjection of the Americans. This would have reached a crisis long since but for the activities of Mr. Hoover. In his anxiety, however, to maintain good relations with all his associates he has always minimized these actions as not vitally affecting the main objects of the relief. The action of the Belgian committees in replacing the name of the Commission for Relief in Belgium by that of the Comité National on distributing stations in Belgium, and the tendency of the Comité National to set itself up in agreements with the German authorities as the responsible agency of the work with occasional references to the C.R.B. as an importing body, and its reports which scarcely acknowledge the existence of the C.R.B. or give it studied omission, are all indicative of a set policy. What they may have in their minds I cannot understand. In any event, the protection of the relief abroad and support by our own Government at Washington in holding the German Government to their undertakings, is wholly impossible upon such a basis, entirely aside from the English view of the matter. The Comité National is not the pivot on which the relief revolves in Belgium. If the time ever arrives when we have to appeal to our Government to support the relief organization in Belgium from German interference we shall make a poor showing if

the German Government should claim that their relations are acknowledged to be with the Comité National, a Belgian organization subject entirely to German domination.

I do not see why the co-operation and participation of the American gentlemen in the work should be offensive to the *amour propre* of the Belgians, or why they should hesitate fully and loyally to recognize and welcome such participation.

In view of the fact that the initial support of the American Government in this matter is due to you and that you have remained in Belgium all this time at so great a sacrifice of your own comfort, it seems unfair that you should be called upon to straighten out such a situation as this; and especially that, when all is said and done, this American effort should be represented as a minor contribution.

As to the Americans who are engaged in this work, if they decline from personal reasons to continue the administration they are now carrying on, I for one will feel compelled to advise our Government that if they cannot succeed no group of Americans can ever hope to do so. In this I am confident you will agree with me.

I am informed that a year ago Mr. Hoover found it was utterly impossible to carry on his personal interests and give the time and energy required to this work, and that he has severed all his professional connections, thus stripping himself entirely of his professional income and position. This represents a greater financial sacrifice than has been given by anyone else of any nationality. If, in addition to the great anxieties over outside matters which grow in difficulty every day, he is to be confronted with anxieties from lack of co-operation and deliberate interference in Belgium, it seems to me that it is too much to ask him, or any other American, to go on. It is asking too much of you and me; we cannot be put in a false position by countenancing the growth in Belgium of an organization different from that prescribed by the agreements with the Allied Governments.

I am, my dear colleague,

Very sincerely

(Signed) WALTER HINES PAGE

DOCUMENT NO. 62

Letter, LORD ROBERT CECIL TO PAGE, *stating that the British Government could not sanction any increase in imports to Belgium or even guarantee continuance of present imports if the Bureau of Inspection and Control were altered*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
20 October 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

With reference to my long letter to you of today, I must explain confidentially to you the vital importance attached by us to the Bureau of Inspection and Control in Belgium. It is not too much

to say that it is on our knowledge of the detailed working of this Bureau that our whole confidence in the efficiency of the organisation in Belgium is based.

Without this knowledge I should feel wholly unable to recommend to His Majesty's Government any increase in the importations of the Commission or in the subsidies granted to it by the Allied Governments, and any doubt as to its smooth working places me in the gravest position at this moment when increased funds and increased importations are being asked for. I could not in these circumstances even guarantee the continuance of present importations, since my confidence in the absence of leakages of foodstuffs to the Germans would be wholly destroyed.

Believe me, my dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(For Viscount Grey of Fallodon)

(Signed) Robert Cecil

DOCUMENT NO. 63

Memorandum of agreement, C.R.B. and the C.N., *approved by the British and Belgian Governments, defining the principles and objectives of the co-operative activities of the two organizations*

London, 30 December 1916

The Commission for Relief in Belgium ("the Commission") and the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation ("the Comité National") have deemed it advisable to review their respective objectives and the principles of their close and friendly co-operation, and they have, in entire agreement, drafted the present memorandum for that purpose. The arrangements as to the relief of Northern France, being the subject of a separate memorandum with the French Government, are not here considered, and these arrangements are solely matters for settlement between the Commission and the French Government.

1. The Commission was founded in October 1914, on the recommendation of American citizens interested in Belgium, by the American and Spanish Ambassadors and Ministers, with their patronage, and the approval of their respective Governments and of the Allied, Belgian and German Governments, to undertake as neutrals the importation and distribution of food supplies and relief to the civil population of the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France.

2. Under the patronage of the Spanish and American Ministers in Brussels, the Comité Central was founded in Belgium in August 1914, by a number of important Belgian citizens residing in the occupied territory, with the sole view of bringing relief to the Belgian civil population, and in October 1914, this body was transformed into the "Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation."

The Commission and the Comité National resolved, in October 1914, to unite their activities, with a view to assuring more efficiency in the carrying out of their common objectives.

3. (*a*) The Commission is directly responsible to its patron ambassadors and ministers, and is entirely independent of control or participation of any of the belligerent governments, and of any organization of belligerent subjects, and employs belligerent subjects only at its own appointment.

The Commission maintains its principal offices in England, with branches in America, Holland, Argentina, France, Belgium, Northern France, and elsewhere, as necessity requires. The Chairman is appointed with the approval of the patron ministers, and the personnel of the Commission is appointed by and responsible to the Chairman.

b) The Commission, either through itself or through its patron ministers, has entered into a large number of undertakings with the Allied, Belgian, and German Governments, fixing the conditions under which it operates, and providing for authorization, protection, transport, and distribution of supplies imported into occupied territory, the protection and distribution of indigenous food supplies, and the protection of the operations of relief generally.

The Commission is thus entrusted with the protection of the relief work and with the protection of all the funds and foodstuffs appertaining thereto, and is responsible to the Allied and Belgian Governments for the observance by the Germans of all the guarantees which have been given with respect to both imported and indigenous foodstuffs, as well as to other matters covered by the guarantees affecting the welfare of the population in the occupied territory.

In execution of its responsibilities, the Commission furnishes to its patron ministers regular reports upon any failure of the undertakings with regard to the protection of imported and indigenous foodstuffs and the organization and operation of the relief generally, in order that the patron ministers may be in position to advise the various governments as to the maintenance of the integrity of the guarantees and the undertakings of the Commission.

c) The Commission has the sole administration of all relief activities exterior to the occupied territory, including the mobilization of finance, food supplies, charity, and the protection and transport of foodstuffs.

d) The Commission is responsible to its patrons, to the neutral governments who give it moral and substantial support, and to the Allied and Belgian Governments, not only for the integrity and neutrality of its operations, but also, in conjunction with the Comité National in the occupied territory, for protecting and insuring the distribution of food supplies, and a priority in the application of food supplies and moneys arising from the sale thereof, to the adequate support of the destitute, and it is recognized by all parties that this function is the sole objective for which the Commission was founded, and is the only stimulus upon which it can continue.

e) The Commission has been, and is, financially supported, not

only by public charity from the British Empire, the United States, and elsewhere, and also from Belgians abroad, but, as the necessities have grown beyond the resources of public charity, it has been predominantly supported by subsidies from the Belgian Government. The Commission receives the constant and sympathetic assistance of the Allied and Belgian Governments in the provision and transport of food supplies.

The Commission furnishes to its patron ministers full accounts, audited by an approved firm of public accountants, of the whole of its financial operations, and detailed statistical data as to the cost, transport, and distribution of foodstuffs and benevolence, and the Commission undertakes to furnish copies of these reports regularly to the Allied and Belgian Governments, and its financial responsibilities cease with the tendering of such audited accounts.

f) The Commission is generally responsible for conveying to the Allied and Belgian Governments, from time to time, the actual needs of the occupied territory as to the import of foodstuffs, and to determine, in co-operation with the Comité National, the needs of the population; and the Commission undertakes to carry out to the best of its ability the restrictions placed upon it by the British Government as to character, quantity, and methods of distribution and transport of commodities imported.

4. (*a*) In the course of its operations the Commission has entered into various arrangements with the Comité National, engaged in detailed distribution, with a view of the discharge of its responsibilities outlined above, and for the furtherance of these objectives the following general principles of relationship between the Commission and the Comité National are here set out as outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6.

b) The Commission maintains an independent organization in Belgium, and, through its Director and his assistants, maintains an intimate co-operation with the Comité National in Brussels, and, by its representatives in the provinces, the same relations to the executives of the provincial committees, and the members of the Commission attend the meetings of the Comité National and participate in their deliberations.

c) The Comité National maintains, through the system of subcommittees, the detailed administrations of the distribution of commodities and relief funds in Belgium. The Comité National has established for that object central offices in Brussels, with branches subordinate to the Comité executif in every provincial head town (Comités provinciaux) as well as in every district head town and in every commune (Comités cantonaux et Comités communaux). The Comité National has also organized, in addition to the local branches, a number of special committees with specific objects. The Comité National is managed by a Comité executif, whose president is appointed by the Comité National. The staff of the central offices in Brussels is appointed by the President of the Comité executif, and is responsible to him. In the provinces the staff is appointed by the president of the provincial, cantonal, and communal committees.

d) The Comité National has been and is financially supported (i) By remittances of the Commission, as outlined in paragraph 6; (ii) By charitable contributions collected among the population in Belgium itself.

5. The general relation between the Commission and the Comité National is one of joint co-operation and collaboration in the general policy and general direction and control of the distribution of commodities and benevolence.

While in general the guardianship of the relief is naturally vested in the Commission, the detailed administration (except transport) is naturally vested in the Comité National, and the general policy is vested jointly in the two Committees, in which each shall have an equal voice, the one appropriate to its larger experience in Belgian life and the actual needs of the population, and the other appropriate to its independence and to its obligations, as set out above, and to its functions in co-ordinating the relief measures inside Belgium to the measures necessitated by physical and political circumstances outside Belgium.

It follows that, from this relationship, no decision as to changes in methods or policy or financial organization shall be made without the mutual agreement of both the Commission and the Comité National, and that any decision taken shall be given prompt and efficient execution, and any abuses discovered shall be promptly remedied by the executives of the Commission and the Comité National.

6. (*a*) The whole of the foodstuffs imported for Belgium shall be charged by the Commission to the Comité National, and shall be sold by the Comité National to the civilian population. The receipts from such sales shall be distributed by the Comité National for benevolent support of the destitute:

(i) As outlined in paragraph 6 (*e*) (i and ii);

(ii) Such purposes as set out in 6 (*e*) (iii); and for

(iii) Payments on account of commercial exchange; and the Comité National shall liquidate the debts against them from the Commission through the acceptance by the Commission of the detailed accounts of the Belgian Committee of Expenditure upon the items i, ii, and iii set out above, these accounts to be subject to audit by the Commission's accountants. All foodstuffs (any moneys so far as expenditures on items i and ii, is concerned) are the properties of the Commission, the Comité National acting as the legal agents for the Commission in such transactions. As evidence of such ownership and joint administration, all working places of the relief organization in Belgium, and all documents relating thereto, shall bear the mention "Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation," "Commission for Relief in Belgium," and all ration cards, etc., shall be issued with the same mention.

b) For administrative purposes in Belgium the Commission and the Comité National will act through the channel of the existing divisions designated hereafter. In each of these divisions all information in the hands of both committees is open to both; (i) Transport; (ii) Ravitaillement; (iii) Secours; (iv) Inspection and Control; (v) Commercial Exchange; (vi) Accounts and Statistics.

c) Transport.—The transport throughout Belgium is managed by the Commission, with the assistance of the Comité National, and commodities are delivered to the local branches of the Comité National, in such proportions as may be determined by the chief executive of the Comité National and of the Commission.

d) Ravitaillement.—The chief executive of the Comité National and the Commission in Brussels will, from time to time, determine in consultation:

(i) The nature and quantities of commodities to be imported.

(ii) The provincial distribution of these commodities.

(iii) The methods of milling and rationing, the amount of the rations, and the control of distribution generally.

(iv) Remedies for defects and abuses in detailed distribution organization.

(v) The prices at which imports are transferred by the Commission to the Comité National, by the Comité National to the provincial committees, by the provincial committees to the cantonal and communal committees, and by the latter sold to the public.

(vi) The measures to be taken as to the control of native food supplies and the general policy to be pursued in connection therewith, the Commission and the Comité National being represented in the Wheat Central, and interesting themselves in securing Belgian or neutral participation in the other centrals controlling the various commodities set up by the German authorities.

On their part the presidents of the provincial committees and the representatives of the Commission in the provinces will from time to time determine in consultation:

(1) The regional distribution of the commodities put at the disposal of their provinces.

(2) The measures to be taken as to the control of native food supplies in their provinces.

(3) Remedies for defects and abuses in detailed distribution organization in their provinces.

e) Secours.—Inasmuch as public charity is now entirely inadequate for the support of the destitute, it is the wish of the Allied and Belgian Governments that their support should constitute a first call upon all funds and foodstuffs at the disposal of the Commission and the Comité National, and it is agreed that all foodstuffs or moneys received from the sale of foodstuffs shall be divided into:

(i) Funds or foodstuffs to be applied to the support of the destitute, which shall include the relief measures given at present under *Secours Ordinaire* and the *Fund Chomage, Soupes Scolaires,* etc., etc., and such other purely benevolent expenditure as may be determined from time to time as necessary. The chief executives of the Commission and the Comité National shall mutually determine periodically the amount to be set aside for these purposes monthly. They shall also determine monthly the division of this general appropriation between the various branches and subcommittees devoted to benevolent support of the destitute, and the accounts of the Comité National and the Commission are to be adjusted from this point of view. All the organisms subsidized under this heading shall be at all times open

to the full investigations of the Commission, and any recommendations made by the Commission shall be mutually considered and determined by the chief executives of the Commission and the Comité National.

(ii) Public charity collected by the Commission shall, as needed, be transferred to the Comité National, whose chief executives, in consultation with the chief executives of the Commission, shall pay such sums out to the various charitable committees in Belgium in such amounts as may be mutually determined from time to time.

(iii) The Commission has no responsibility with regard to the distribution of the remainder of the funds available after the satisfaction of the necessities of the destitute. The Commission will, however, upon receipt of statements of such disbursements under paragraph 6, transmit them in their accounts to the Allied and Belgian Governments.

f) Inspection.—The Central Bureau of Inspection shall be maintained and managed jointly by representatives from the Commission and the Comité National. The existing branch bureau shall be likewise maintained in each of the provinces, managed by joint representatives of the Commission and the provincial committee.

The purpose of these bureaus shall be:

(i) To investigate and report on all infractions of the guarantees. The reports of this division shall be handled jointly by the chief executives of the Commission and the Belgian Committee, and protests presented to the German authorities either by their own representatives or through the protecting ministers.

(ii) The investigation and report on the resales of imported foodstuffs or illicit transactions in native foodstuffs. The abuses so determined shall be at once taken up by the representatives of the Comité National or of the provincial committees on the inspection, and suppressed, either directly or in co-operation with the judicial authorities in the country, and the central and local bureaus shall be kept advised of these actions.

(iii) The inspection of the administrative operations of the various subcommittees throughout the country. The reports as to abuses in these matters shall be handed to the chief executives of the Comité National for action.

All questions arising under any of these heads shall form the subject of regular reports from the Commission to the patron ministers under paragraph 3 (*b*).

g) Commercial Exchange.—The Allied Governments have granted to the Commission the right to accept payments abroad from private individuals and firms for transmission into Belgium and payment out of the receipts from the sale of foodstuffs. The Comité National will make such payments for the account of the Commission, as outlined in paragraph 6.

h) Accounts and Statistics.—The Comité National is to furnish to the Commission monthly statements of all its accounts, to be audited by the accountants of the Commission, and the Commission and the Comité National are to maintain departments of statistics, and the Commission is to report regularly to the patron ministers the details

of food and clothing distribution over the whole country and the distribution of funds for the support of the destitute.

SIGNED[16] the.....day of December, one thousand, nine hundred and sixteen.

.....

Chairman, Comité Executif, Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation

.....

Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium

7. The British and Belgian Governments give their complete approval to the principles of joint and friendly co-operation expounded in the present memorandum, and they express their satisfaction with the Commission's and the Comité National's conduct of the relief during the period of over two years during which they have devoted themselves to the service of the Belgian people. The Belgian Government and people welcome all these activities of both the Commission and the Comité National for the protection and security of their people.

Should irreconcilable differences arise between the Commission and the Comité National, no executive action shall be taken on either side until the Allied and Belgian Governments and the patron ministers shall have determined the matter and so advised both committees.

The discussion culminating in the precise statement given above finally determined the position of the Commission. A month later, however, the United States broke off relations with Germany and on the 6th April 1917 America was in the war. These great events made it necessary to replace the Americans in Belgium with nationals of neutral states. Three and a half years' experience had established the technique of relief, and as far as relief distribution was concerned, the succeeding months brought to light no new experience within the invaded territories. A Spanish-Dutch committee was organized to protect the distribution of relief[17] but outside of Belgium the Commission's organization and functions remained unchanged. A C.R.B. office in Brussels

[16] This memorandum of agreement was submitted to the British Foreign Office for its approval. Hoover signed for the Commission on the 30th December 1916. Francqui (in Paris temporarily) signed on behalf of the Comité National early in January 1917.

[17] See chapter xii.

under a Belgian director[18] continued to provide contact between the internal and external organizations. When, in the autumn of 1918, the Germans evacuated Belgium, the Commission returned its American delegates to the liberated regions, where they were occupied in assisting the Belgians with their enormous burden of reconstruction.

[18] Fernand Baetens was appointed representative of the C.R.B. in Belgium beginning with the 1st May 1917. See chapter xii.

Chapter III

PROGRAM OF IMPORTATIONS

The relief of Belgium was not a matter of pouring into that country a stream of supplies for a large number of people suddenly destitute, as is the case when a region is devastated by flood or earthquake; it was a problem of provisioning a whole nation (and part of another), highly industrialized, densely populated, and suddenly cut off from those external markets in which it sold its products and from which it drew its raw materials and eighty per cent of the cereals it normally consumed. It was not merely the poor and the victims of military devastation, who had to be fed. Refugees and workers deprived of their employment by the sudden war were naturally the first to feel the effects of Belgium's commercial isolation; but in a short time well-to-do and poor alike faced the common threat of famine.

During August and the first week of September the battle line swept across Belgium and into France, halted at the Marne on the 10th September, surged back to the Aisne, and then solidified in a double line of entrenchments from Nieuport on the Channel to the Swiss border. North and east of this line German forces occupied and ruled 20,000 square miles of Belgian and French territory with a population of over 9,000,000. The local food supplies of these regions, under normal conditions seriously insufficient, were reduced by military activities. The invasion came at harvest time; crops were destroyed, food was confiscated, and grain left unharvested in the fields in the confusion and panic of the first weeks of war. First the great industrial centers like Brussels, Charleroi, Mons, then progressively the smaller towns felt the bottom of the barrel of their food reserves, until by October it was clear that the entire country, except the relatively unimportant agricultural districts, would within a few weeks be starving.

The task of the relief organizations that intervened at this desperate moment was at first, by emergency shipments, to avert the disaster immediately threatening, and subsequently to organize a program of food imports, and eventually of clothing, which added to the local products would preserve

the people of Belgium and Northern France in health. The accomplishment of this task involved more than estimating the normal consumption, deducting the local production, and sending out orders in the food markets of the world to make up the deficit. As will be shown later the local produce also had to be taken under control and rationed in order that injustice should not ensue in the face of insufficient supplies. Obstacles of all sorts intervened. There was no possibility of providing for normal consumption, and to maintain even the minimum of subsistence involved the directors of the C.R.B. in an incessant battle that lasted through four arduous years and that always seemed on the point of being lost. The first engagement in this struggle to maintain a program was over the matter of finance of which there was practically none at the beginning of the operations.[1] Then came restrictions of the Allied Governments on the quantity and character of C.R.B. imports,[2] and finally the shortage of food in accessible markets and the shortage of shipping resulting from submarine activities and other causes.[3] Each of these engagements, though constituting but one in the series that made up the general battle to maintain a program, was of such importance that had it been lost the feeding of Belgium would have failed.

Because the program of importations was so involved with other issues the following documents do not constitute a connected narrative; they do, however, show the problem to be solved, the changes in that problem as the result of internal and external events, and the progress made in solving it.[4]

[1] This is treated in chapters iv, xiii, xiv, and xv.

[2] See Documents 69–91.

[3] See chapter v.

[4] For a statistical summary of importations see Gay, *The Commission for Relief in Belgium; Statistical Review of Relief Operations*, pp. 18–19. This book gives a complete statistical analysis of the relief operations, and is referred to hereafter as Gay, *Statistics*.

1. *The First Year. November 1914–October 1915*

DOCUMENT NO. 64

Telegram,[5] FRANCQUI TO HOOVER, *giving preliminary estimate of necessary monthly importations for Belgium*

BRUSSELS, 26 October 1914

HOOVER, LONDON

Monthly needs Belgian population, minimum 60,000 tons wheat, 15,000 tons maize, 3,000 tons rice and dried peas.

FRANCQUI

The above estimate (which Hoover had asked Francqui to prepare) of a minimum monthly importation of 78,000 tons of cereals constituted the first paper program which the Commission attempted to realize after the first emergency supplies were rushed into Belgium. The need of a definite program in place of the inevitably haphazard methods of the first days of relief was obvious, but the obstacles to the realization of that program were enormous. First there was the matter of finance. This is treated in detail in a later chapter;[6] here it is sufficient to note that the resources in sight consisted of £100,000 provided by the British Government; the hope (eventually realized) of a loan from Belgian bankers of £600,000 which Francqui and his associates were attempting to arrange; and charitable contributions (extent unknown) which appeals to the world might produce. The response to these appeals was generous but quite inadequate to meet the program. Supplementary purchases had to be made, and funds for this purpose and to pay transportation charges on gift supplies had to be found. All monies in hand were quickly used up and Hoover assumed personal liabilities for large sums to meet this emergency. Needless to say, because of these difficulties and the reluctance of the British Government in view of Great Britain's food position to permit the Commission to buy supplies in England or cargoes en route there, the importations during November and December 1914 were far below the program. A timely cargo of miscellaneous foodstuffs from Nova Scotia, a group of cargoes financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, a small but invaluable loan of flour from the Dutch Government and a

[5] Extract. For full text of telegram see Document 25, chapter ii.

[6] Chapter iv.

similar loan of Canadian wheat received from the British Government brought the total of food delivered by the Commission at Rotterdam by the end of December to 79,000 tons valued at $4,500,000.[7]

DOCUMENT NO. 65

Memorandum,[8] BY SIR EDWARD GREY, *relative to C.R.B. export permits, purchases, etc., with comments by W. Runciman, President of the Board of Trade*

LONDON, 25 October 1914

The American Ambassador informs me today that the American, Spanish, and Belgian Committee, assuming that a permit to let food supplies go to Belgium would allow them to export food from here, and knowing that the need is great, have already purchased £30,000 of foodstuffs and chartered a Dutch ship to convey them to Rotterdam. They now find that the export from this country is prohibited.

(We can agree to this. License must be issued at once. W.R.[9])

They would be quite willing to replace these foodstuffs by others, imported subsequently.

(Note this. W.R.)

There are cargoes of wheat now on the Atlantic, on their way to British merchants. Would the Committee be permitted to buy any of these cargoes and divert them to Rotterdam, without their being brought here at all?

(We deprecate this. W.R.)

There are cargoes of rice from India to Great Britain destined for the United States. Might the Committee buy some of these which are now on their way, and send them to Rotterdam instead of to the United States?

(Those cargoes actually consigned to U.S.A. can go to Rotterdam. We should be given the names. W.R.)

There is no large amount of food to be bought in Holland.

The Ambassador asks whether, when food is imported subsequently from the United States for the Belgian population, the food may be *stored in warehouses* here?

(We would certainly not object. W.R.)

The Committee would propose to send it only in small quantities to Belgium; so that, should the Germans, in spite of the assurance of the German Commander, confiscate any of this food, they would be able to detain the bulk of it here at any time.

[7] See chapter i, Document 20, and Gay, *Statistics*, pp. 38–39.

[8] This memorandum had been formulated by Mr. Hoover and presented to Sir Edward Grey by Ambassador Page.

[9] Walter Runciman.

The American organisations and some wealthy men are anxious to send food to Belgium, and have already sent £12,000 here to be used for this purpose. The American Ambassador will tell them not to send money in future, but to despatch food direct from the United States.

(Much better. W.R.)

He asks whether it could not be sent in British ships from the United States, as well as in neutral ships?

I have told him that with the Germans at Ostend, I doubt whether we would insure British ships on the way to Rotterdam; a British ship might be captured by the Germans.

(She could not come within our Insurance cover, but if she were covered separately at New York or at Lloyds against War Risk, British ships would no doubt be obtainable. W.R.)

DOCUMENT NO. 66

Letter, FRANCQUI TO HOOVER, *stating increase in imports required to meet the growing needs of the Belgian population*

BRUSSELS, 2 March 1915

MY DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have had occasion on various opportunities to impart to the Commission for Relief in Belgium the increasing need of our people. The monthly consignments are hardly sufficient to satisfy the demands of our Provincial Committees.

I therefore allow myself to suggest that you should make new efforts with a view to increasing the tonnage of the imports, following the indications below:

1) Wheat and flour. The consignments should continue in the existing proportions, which are a strict minimum (60,000 tons a month).

2) Lard and bacon. It is necessary to buy about 1,000 tons a month (500 tons bacon and 500 lard). Under the circumstances the National Committee does not keep to the limit of a price of 1.90 frs. to 2.00 fixed previously, but it asks that you should buy under the best conditions.

3) Rice. Besides the usual arrivals, it would be desirable to receive a large boatload of this product at the end of May and again at the end of June.

4) Peas and beans. It will be necessary to continue the imports in the existing proportions.

5) Maize. If it is possible, it would be desirable to purchase more maize before the next harvest, and above all white maize which will give white flour; if this is not possible, to take some measures to import a sufficiently large quantity of this product, until the beginning of the next harvest.

6) Potatoes. The National Committee will take as much as you can send until the beginning of the next harvest, say the end of July.

Failing fresh potatoes, the Committee asks you to buy dried potatoes and potato flour. I confirm this request; but I should be glad to know what are the prices of these products. The Provincial Committees praise the qualities of dried potatoes to me, but as the quantity put at their disposal came from gifts, I have no idea of their price.

7) Salt and dried fish. I requested the Rotterdam office to buy salt and smoked fish, and as a trial to make a special consignment for Hainaut. If this first experiment is a success, the National Committee will want other large quantities of these products. One could perhaps buy it, instead of in Holland, in Norway or Sweden, or Scotland. I wish to draw your attention particularly to this kind of food, which is one of the most nutritive of common foods.

8) Meats. The Provincial Committees insist on receiving meat at reasonable prices. Failing a proper means of transportation, the importation of frozen meat is impossible unless your London Office could charter a special boat as far as Brussels, a boat which would at the same time serve Antwerp. But, even in this case, the rest of the country could not be supplied with frozen meat. In any case, I think it necessary to ask you to order some American salt meat. They mention particularly meat in casks, as being possible to deliver at very low prices. It should be understood, however, that I place no limit for the present, either on the kind of meat or the quantity ordered, so long as the prices are advantageous. It would be best to buy, as is best for the interests of the Provincial Committees, such salted meats as you would judge would suit our people best.

I know, dear Mr. Hoover, that you will consider this question with the same activity and untiring devotion, which you have proved to us so often; and thanking you once more, I beg to remain.

&C &C &C

(Signed) E. FRANCQUI

[*Translation*]

This request for an increased program of importation including supplies of new categories such as fats, meats, potatoes, et cetera put a new strain on the financial resources of the Commission, to which in April was added the additional requirement of from 15,000 to 18,000 tons for the 2,000,000 people in occupied French territories.[10] At the same time the contributions in kind, which had provided for nearly one-fourth of the imports, could no longer be depended upon to provide for this proportion of the needs. Fortunately the negotiations for government subsidies were successfully concluded in February. But even before he was certain of success in these negotiations, Hoover had in-

[10] The negotiations preceding the extension of relief in Northern France are given in chapter vi.

creased the Commission's purchases in anticipation of the new requirements. The Commission was able, therefore, to deliver 110,000 tons of supplies at Rotterdam in April and to maintain during May and June monthly deliveries of 100,000 tons and thus provide for the French territories without reducing the deliveries to Belgium.

DOCUMENT NO. 67

Telegram, HOOVER TO C.R.B. REPRESENTATIVE IN PARIS, *stating monthly food requirements of population in Northern France*

LONDON, 15 March 1915

GIFFORD PINCHOT
AMERICAN EMBASSY, PARIS

Studies of our people indicate we could handle two million French people on supply of thirteen thousand tons wheat, twelve hundred tons beans, five hundred tons bacon, twelve hundred tons rice per month. This implies smaller ration than Belgium and could be managed on subsidy of three hundred thousand pounds per month. We can probably procure enough supplies here in addition to what we have now available; therefore what we want is this money, and in view of critical condition cereal market we should have the money placed at our disposal at once so as to be able to procure and pay for three months' supply and thereafter three hundred thousand pounds per month in order to provide for the third month forward, this system to continue until we have provided for month of July, that is, March, April, May, June, July, five months, making total one and half million pounds. We have during last two months and in continuance of our work during March depleted our Belgian supplies by an amount equal to three hundred thousand pounds, which I therefore include in above budget, this sum in respect of March.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 68

Memorandum,[11] BY HOOVER, *setting out program of imports to the harvest*

BRUSSELS, 21 June 1915

It has been decided by the C.N. and the C.R.B. that, in order to substantially provision the civil population with the minimum of absolute necessities, and to properly regulate the shipments of imported foodstuffs into Belgium, the following course shall be pursued until it shall be altered by general agreement:

[11] Prepared in consultation with the Comité National during Hoover's negotiations with the Germans for the protection of the 1915 harvest. See chapter viii.

1. That in future, the import of foodstuffs into Belgium shall be confined to the following commodities:

Wheat or flour	Lard
Rice	Bacon
Peas and beans	Maize

2. In the matter of flour it is considered that the consumption until harvest is about 50,000 tons per month or about 55,000 tons of wheat.

The stocks of flour (or wheat in terms of 90 per cent flour) are, on the 1st of June:

In Belgium.....	65,000 tons	
Transit and Rotterdam.....	161,000 tons	
	226,000 tons	
Reserved for France.....	49,000 tons	(3½ months)
	177,000 tons	(3½ months)

It is considered that, as the harvest will be available in September, an additional purchase of 12,000 tons will be sufficient until October 1st.

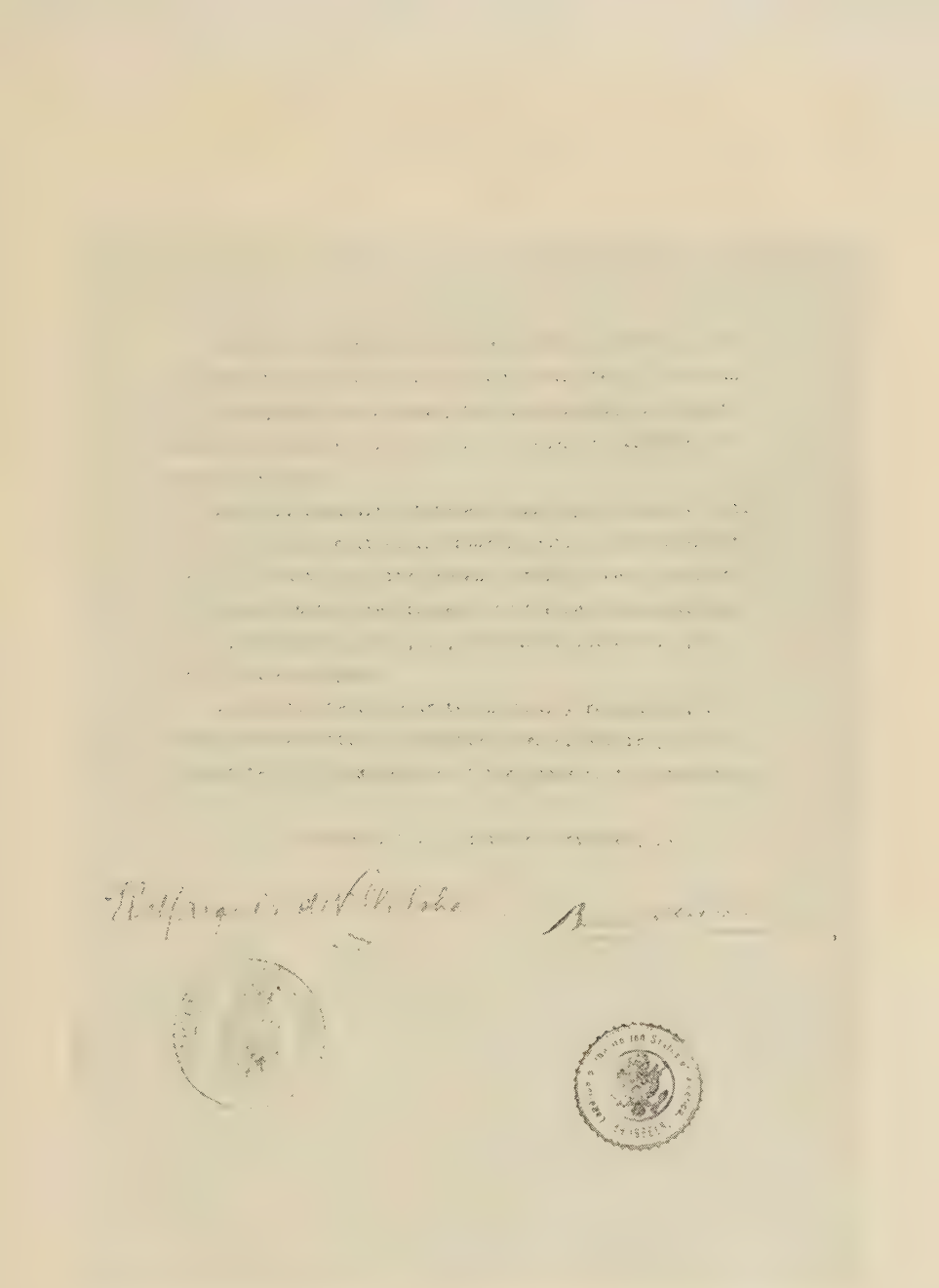
That in the matter of the ratio of wheat to flour, the cities of Antwerp and Brussels shall be provided with white flour, until the whole of the present purchases are exhausted, and unless three months' notice is given to the contrary, the Commission will then proceed to supply Brussels and Antwerp with wheat.

3. In the matter of rice, it is agreed that the apparent consumption is at the rate of about 2,500 tons per month, but that it is likely to increase and therefore a supply of 5,000 tons per month is contemplated. The stocks on June 1st are apparently as follows:

In Belgium.....	6,000 tons	
In transit and Rotterdam.....	30,000 tons	
	36,000 tons	
Reserved for France.....	7,500 tons	(5 months)
	28,500 tons	(5½ months' supply, or sufficient until the end of October.)

4. In the matter of peas and beans, it is agreed that the consumption in Belgium is under 4,000 tons per month. It is found that the stocks as at June 1st are as follows:

In Belgium.....	17,000 tons	
In transit and Rotterdam.....	7,000 tons	
	24,000 tons	
Reserved for France.....	7,000 tons	(5 months)
	17,000 tons	(probably sufficient until January 1st.)



Certificate, 2 November 1914, Whitlock and Villalobar, Confirming Belgium's Requirements

It is considered there is likely to be little demand in Belgium owing to the local production, and therefore no further engagements should be made.

5. In the matter of bacon, it is decided that in the future this commodity should be purchased for its meat value (i.e. lean sides), and therefore the best average quality is wanted.

It is considered that the Belgian consumption is 1,500 tons per month.

The stocks at June 1st are roughly estimated as follows:

Belgium	1,600 tons	
Transit and Rotterdam.....	7,000 tons	
	8,600 tons	
Reserved for France.....	3,000 tons	(3 months)
Belgium balance.....	5,600 tons	(4 mos., less 400 tons)

It is noted that of the purchases already made, a considerable portion are fat backs, but no more of these are to be purchased. It is observed that hereafter all prices should be taken at net weights.

6. In the matter of lard, it is believed that it is unwise to purchase substitutes, and that only pure lard in tins of various sizes should be purchased.

It is considered that the consumption in Belgium is about 750 tons per month. The stocks at June 1st are estimated about as follows:

In Belgium	1,000 tons	
In transit and Rotterdam....	3,000 tons	
	4,000 tons	
Reserved for France.....	1,500 tons	(3 months)
	2,500 tons	(3½ months)

It is observed that hereafter all transactions should take place in *net weights.*

7. In the matter of maize, it is considered that the present purchases will last until September 1st; that 20,000 tons should be averaged for September; the whole subject to be taken up later.

8. As it is absolutely necessary that the stocks of imported foodstuffs in Belgium should not exceed a 30 days' supply, it is imperative that there shall be a competent stock-taking of all the warehouses at the end of every month, and that these results should be in the hands of the Brussels office by the fifth day of the succeeding month. Rotterdam can then be advised as to the amount of the different commodities which should be consigned to the different provinces or shipping destinations in order to supply the consumption during the month and to leave the warehouses at the end of the month supplied with approximately one month's supplies.

9. In order that the C.R.B. may purchase supplies in the primary markets and thus avoid the overpayment of emergency purchases,

it is absolutely fundamental that any change in the theoretical program should be advised three months in advance.

10. It is decided to reorganize the statistical department by adding an American delegate, who can travel about and collect the necessary statistics and present them in form to control the supplies and shipments, and to furnish the C.R.B. in London with the data they require.

11. It is considered essential that permanent warehouse space should be taken in Rotterdam, where at least one month's full supplies for Belgium and France can be carried in permanent reserve.

12. It is decided that the C.R.B. shall readjust its prices to the C.N. every two months, beginning July 1st.

It is the general intention that the C.R.B. should make approximately 10 per cent profit on all commodities for the benefit of the destitute, but in the matter of wheat, the price must be adjusted in consultation with the C.N. It is also intended that minimum profits should be made on wheat and bacon and larger profits on peas, beans, and especially rice and maize. The profits earned from the sales to the well-to-do people form a tax for the benefit of the poor, and should, if possible, be maintained at about 2,500,000 francs per month in order that the soup kitchens may be properly supported.

With the end of October 1915 the Commission had completed its first year. It had delivered in Rotterdam 980,000 tons[12] of relief supplies valued at $69,000,000, and though there had been some undernourishment the people in Belgium and Northern France had escaped the famine which had cast its shadow over them twelve months before. Bread grains and cereals formed 90 per cent of the importations into Belgium, yet the Commission had found it necessary to supply some fats so that importations in combination with the local produce would result in a balanced ration for the 9,000,000 people. In Northern France the Commission found it immediately necessary to broaden its category of importations due to the dearth of many articles. At a later date the same necessity arose for Belgium.

Gifts in kind to the generous total of 93,000 tons and a value of over $9,000,000 formed part of the Commission's importations. Full gift cargoes of wheat and flour had been transported, and these with the gifts of maize, rice, peas, and beans entered readily into the machinery of rationing set up by the Commission. Of greater difficulty in handling were the 12,000 tons of miscellaneous groceries donated

[12] See Gay, *Statistics*, pp. 36–37.

during the first year. The call for gift clothing had resulted in some 2,000 tons and this had been renovated and distributed to the destitute. As had been anticipated the monthly donations in kind had fallen off considerably by the end of the first year.

2. *The Second Year. November 1915–October 1916*

DOCUMENT NO. 69

Table, showing program of monthly imports for winter 1915–1916

MONTHLY PROGRAM OF IMPORTATIONS, BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE, WINTER 1915–1916

(Metric tons)

	Belgium	Northern France	Total
Wheat	60,000	16,000	76,000
Maize	20,000	2,200	22,200
Rice	5,000	4,400	9,400
Beans and peas	4,000	1,650	5,650
Bacon and lard	4,800	3,850	8,650
Sugar	....	1,320	1,320
Coffee	....	1,100	1,100
Milk	....	1,650	1,650
Soap	....	1,100	1,100
Sundries	1,000	1,650	2,650
Totals	94,800	34,920	129,720

The adoption of the program above for the winter of 1915–1916 followed a series of events which marked the transition of Belgian relief from its original, temporary character to a more permanent basis. In June 1915 Hoover had secured from the German authorities guarantees, acceptable to the Commission and the British Foreign Office, which reserved the Belgian harvest of that year for the civil population.[13] At about the same time the British Government reviewed the whole question of Belgian relief and made very definite stipulations concerning the Commission's activities.[14] Of particular interest here was the limitation of the Commission's Belgian imports to wheat and wheat flour

[13] See chapter viii.

[14] See Foreign Office letters of July 7 and 17, Document 341, chapter viii, and Document 38, chapter ii.

(which could not exceed 60,000 tons of equivalent wheat per month before the harvest and was to be reduced to a minimum supplement of native supplies after the harvest), peas, beans, rice, bacon, lard, and maize (for human consumption only). The quantities of these commodities other than wheat to be imported were fixed from time to time in agreement with the Foreign Office. These restrictions determined the "permitted program" which the Commission might not exceed.

DOCUMENT NO. 70

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *stating restrictions placed on C.R.B. imports as result of alleged violations of agreement by the Germans*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
16 December 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

As a result of our conversation this afternoon, I think it well to put on paper the present situation.

At present your staple articles of importation into Belgium are wheat, rice, bacon, lard, beans, and maize. Besides these, we have authorized you at various times to import certain articles which you class as "produits divers," i.e., soap, coffee, sugar, oleomargarine materials (to be used solely in a factory to be controlled by you), butter, fish, preserved meat, salt, groceries, cheese, dried fruit and vegetables, yeast materials, and cocoa. In regard to certain of these articles I understand that you have not availed yourself of our authorisation at all; in regard to others very little. Finally, you have been authorised to import certain purely charitable relief supplies, i.e., medical supplies and clothing for the destitute.

In view of action by the Germans which appears *prima facie* to infringe their undertakings, and in view of grave doubts which have arisen as to whether certain of these imports do not in effect constitute a replacement of articles bought or otherwise taken by the Germans, it is necessary to restrict your activities for the moment.

You have already been asked, and have undertaken, to ship no further consignments of meat, bacon, lard, or other pork products from Rotterdam either to Belgium or France until further notice. I must now ask you also to stop all shipments from Rotterdam to Belgium of soap, coffee, sugar, oleomargarine materials, butter, salt, groceries, cheese, dried fruit and vegetables, and yeast materials. The only shipments which you may still make to Belgium from Rotterdam will therefore be wheat, rice, beans, maize, fish, and cocoa, and medical supplies and clothing for relief purposes.

Your programme of importations into Northern France has been somewhat different, namely: wheat, rice, beans and peas, bacon, lard, sugar, salt, coffee, soap, and condensed milk. Besides this you have been importing certain quantities of salted meat. As the condi-

tions in Northern France are somewhat different, I do not want to ask you at the moment to cut off any importations into France from Rotterdam, except the meat, bacon, lard, and all pork products as already arranged, and also soap. The only importations you will make into France for the moment will therefore be wheat, rice, beans and peas, sugar, salt, coffee, and condensed milk.

I am not sure at the moment whether you have been importing any condensed milk into Belgium, but if so this may continue if necessary to supply destitute children.

I shall be glad to hear from you that you are prepared to give an assurance to the above effect.

I do not want to close this letter without saying, what you already know, that these restrictions on your activities arise out of the exigencies of the situation and imply no loss of confidence in you or the other members of the Commission.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 71

Letter and memorandum, HOOVER TO PERCY, *reviewing the whole question of C.R.B. imports into Belgium and Northern France*

LONDON, 21 December 1915

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

MY DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

With respect to your letter requesting that I should review the whole question of imports, I believe it is desirable that I should do so in two separate memoranda, one as to Northern France and the other as to Belgium, as these are economically and administratively entirely separate problems.

As to all these lists or any part it must not be imagined that we will succeed in importing precisely these monthly quantities. These amounts are consumption and we must carry stocks both in Belgium and Rotterdam.

Yours faithfully

HERBERT C. HOOVER, *Chairman*

MEMORANDUM

I. BELGIUM

The following shows approximately the imports desired by our friends in Belgium:

Wheat.—The available native wheat supply, which is under our control, affords us about 13,500 tons of wheat per month. It is therefore necessary for us to import about 54,000 tons per month, in order to give a 250 gram flour ration to the population. Owing to the lateness of the harvest all over the world, our stocks in Belgium have run down until we have, aside from stuff in transit, today only

an average of two days' supply in our warehouses in Belgium, and it is therefore necessary for us to build up some stocks in the country, which implies larger importations in the immediate future, with, of course, a slackening off towards the end.

Lard.—In order to enable us to give a ration of 33 grams (1 oz.) per diem, it will be necessary to import 7,000 tons of lard per month into Belgium.

Bacon.—In order to give a ration of 16½ grams (½ oz.) of bacon per diem to Belgium, it will be necessary to import 3,500 tons per month.

Maize.—Maize is used partly for human food, in the form of a porridge product called cerealine, designed for children, while the refuse and the rest of the maize is used for fodder. The amount which we have set for ourselves for this purpose is 20,000 tons per month. This represents half the normal importation into Belgium and is used largely for poultry purposes and the feeding of municipal livestock.

Rice.—We have, during recent months, been importing about 5,000 tons of rice per month for Belgian account. It is issued as a ration but is participated in only by the more indigent portion of the population and it has not covered the whole of the people as a ration of 60 grams of rice per diem would require a larger quantity than this.

Beans, peas, and lentils.—Our requirements are about 4,000 tons a month. The demand varies with the season. During the summer we do not require the whole of our imports. These are in stock and are now coming into use again and we shall need to resume imports on this scale at an early date.

Condensed milk.—We shall need to be prepared to import during the winter, perhaps 1,000 tons of condensed milk per month for Belgian account. It is used chiefly for the support of the children and is made an eminent necessity by the natural shortage of fresh fodder during the winter.

Medical supplies.—We import an irregular amount of these materials.

Clothing for the destitute.—We are begging and buying considerable amounts of cloth, boots, shoes, old clothes, and every sort of wearing apparel, and are *giving* it away to the absolutely destitute only.

Petrol and tires and spares.—We are entirely dependent upon imports for the running of our automobiles and we simply cannot do our work without these supplies. We have had a permit for 5,000 litres a week of petrol, which is an undersupply.

Yeast materials.—We used to import a certain amount of barley, rye, and malt radicles for yeast making. This amounts to probably 1,000 tons of stuff per month.

"PRODUITS DIVERS"

As you understand, a considerable portion of bacon and lard is paid for under the heading of this account, and the following are approximately the desires and needs of the Belgian people for various articles which have hitherto been embraced in this list:

Preserved and frozen meat.—The various Belgian communities are clamoring for the importation of beef products, and this amounts to, presumably, a total of 1,000 or 1,500 tons per month of each material.

Cocoa.—This item probably amounts to 1,000 tons of cocoa or cocoa beans per month for the manufacture of chocolate.

Coffee.—The Belgians are anxious to secure the importation of at least 2,000 tons of coffee per month, the depletion of stocks in Belgium making this imperative.

Sugar.—There appears to be available about 5,000 tons of sugar per month to the Belgian population from native production, against a normal consumption of about 10,000 tons a month. Many quarters of the country are already short of sugar and the Belgians are anxious to import at least 2,000 tons a month.

Soap.—The exhaustion of oil materials in Belgium makes the local manufacture of soap inadequate and the Belgians are anxious to import at least 1,000 tons of soap per month for their account.

Oleomargarine materials.—We have prepared a factory for handling imported components for oleomargarine, and something like 1,000 tons per month are wanted to stem the butter famine.

Butter.—The Belgians wish us to import butter, in what amount we cannot estimate, probably not exceeding 500 tons per month.

Preserved fish.—The Belgians wish us to make arrangements to import dried herrings, tinned salmon, and other forms of fish. I do not know how much this would run into and amount to, but I suppose, say, 300 or 400 tons.

Dried fruit and vegetables.—Under this item is the ordinary form of dried fruit—raisins, prunes, apples, etc.

Comestible oils.—This item is for salad oil and is made up of either pure olive oil or with peanut and cottonseed substitutes, and the Belgian requirements seem to run into 400 tons a month, as a minimum.

Linseed cake.—The Belgians desire to have linseed cake imported for fodder purposes and we had a formal permit for 10,000 tons.

Sugar refuse.—The Belgians desire this also for fodder purposes and we had a practically unlimited right to import this from Holland.

Salt and groceries generally.—You will recollect that under the "Produits Divers" arrangement we had the right to import various articles comprised under these heads, including tea.

Potatoes.—There are apparently ample potatoes in Belgium, but they cannot be obtained from the peasants in view of expected famine prices. If we could import 10,000 tons per month for a while we would smash the market.

Cheese.—The Belgians wish to import up to 2,000 tons per month from Holland.

II. NORTHERN FRANCE

After the intimate study of the situation by all the district committees and the American members of the Commission, the following program of food supplies has been drawn up to cover the next four

months. It is agreed that this is the absolute minimum supply with which health can be preserved in the population and in itself depends on a certain amount of additions of local supplies, which are day by day growing less:

Commodity	Ration (grams per day)	Total tons per month for whole population (2,200,000)	Cost per kilo (frs.)	Total cost (frs.)
Imports				
Flour	200	16,000[a]	.33	5,280,000
Lard	33	2,200	1.70	3,740,000
Bacon	25	1,650	2.00	3,300,000
Rice	66	4,400	.375	1,650,000
Condensed milk	25	1,650	1.25	2,062,500
Beans and lentils	25	1,650	.55	907,500
Sugar	20	1,320	.625	825,000
Coffee	16.5	1,100	1.325	1,457,500
Salt	20	1,320	.035	112,200
Soap	16.5	1,100	.625	687,500
Potatoes	200	13,200	.15	1,980,000
Cerealine	16.5	2,200[b]	.30	660,000
Salad, cottonseed, and peanut oil	5.	330	1.15	379,500
Carbide		500	1.875	937,500
Total imports	668.5	48,620		23,979,200
Domestic Supplies[c]				
Flour	100			
Potatoes	200			
Domestic ration	300			
Total ration	968.5			

[a] Wheat. [b] Maize. [c] By agreement with the Germans.

The almost total exhaustion of many food supplies except vegetables and a little meat in circulation, obtainable by the wealthy, makes it practically necessary to make a balanced ration, and I submit that the above ration is not as good as that of a prisoner in the English gaols, and that if it were submitted to any dietary expert he would state that it is hopeless to withdraw any part of the ration.

In addition to the above the population of this territory is asking for preserved meat, vinegar, and other sundries; and with regard to the above table I should like to make the following comments:

Potatoes.—You will notice that we have introduced here the importation of potatoes. This is a little involved. At the present moment the Belgian peasant is holding up his potatoes and refusing

to bring them out, in anticipation of famine prices. Last year we obtained a permit from the government to import potatoes into Belgium under similar circumstances, and by the introduction of 17,000 tons of potatoes we broke the market from 35 centimes a kilo down to 12 centimes, and held it there. There is a superabundance of potatoes in Ireland going to waste today and I have no anticipation that we should need to import continuously for Northern France if we could once demonstrate to the Belgian public that potatoes could flow into the country.

Cerealine.—Cerealine is a sort of porridge product which we make ourselves in Belgium out of imported maize. It is chiefly designed for the use of the children.

Carbide.—In the country outside the larger cities which are lighted by electricity, there is absolutely no illuminant, and people are going to bed at five o'clock in the afternoon. There are in circulation all over the country small miners' acetylene lamps, and it seems to us there could be no objection to importing carbide, as there is an ample supply of this material for all German purposes flowing into Germany from Scandinavia, or supplies of German production. We have managed to buy locally some carbide of Norwegian origin, but there is an insufficient supply.

III. TOTALS

Imports for Belgium and Northern France

(Metric tons per month)

Commodity	Northern France	Belgium	Total
Wheat (or flour)	16,000	54,000	70,000
Lard	2,200	7,000	9,200
Bacon	1,650	3,500	5,150
Rice	4,400	5,000	9,400
Condensed milk	1,650	1,000	2,650
Beans and peas	1,650	4,000	5,650
Maize	2,200	20,000	22,200
Sugar	1,320	2,000	3,320
Coffee	1,100	2,000	3,100
Salt	(1,320)	.....	.....
Soap	1,100	1,000	2,100
Potatoes	13,200	10,000	23,200
Salad oils	330	400	730
Carbide	500	.....	500
Preserved meat	1,000	1,500	2,500
Preserved fish	300	400	700
Cocoa	.....	1,000	1,000
Oleomargarine materials	.....	1,000	1,000
Butter	.....	500	500
Dried fruit	(say) 1	100	101

IMPORTS FOR BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE (*Continued*)

(Metric tons per month)

Commodity	Northern France	Belgium	Total
Linseed cake	.....	10,000	10,000
Sugar refuse	.....	?	?
Groceries	.....	?	?
Cheese	.....	2,000	2,000
Yeast materials	.....	?	?
Medical supplies	?	?	?
Clothing for destitute	?	?	?
Petrol, tires, and spares	.....	?	?

DOCUMENT NO. 72

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *concerning holding up bacon and lard cargoes and the return of empty tins in which condensed milk was shipped to Belgium*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
28 December 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I am sorry to involve you in so many difficulties, but I have two points on which I must trouble you.

First, as to the "Livingstonia." I find that some of our people don't want her cargo to go on from Rotterdam till the final consideration of the whole question this week. The Admiralty have consequently held her up in the Downs, and I have said that, if she is released, I will see that the Commission does not ship her cargo from Rotterdam until this decision is reached. As I hope for a decision not later than Friday, this should make practically no difference. Will you see to it?

As a matter of fact this cargo, with what you had in stock at Rotterdam and with the remainder of the "Levenpool" cargo and the 1,450 tons of bacon and lard you have bought here, will amount to considerable more than the 6,900 tons a month which is now our temporary basis.

Second, as to the condensed milk. Our people are firm on the point about the return of the empty tins. The danger does not arise from the amount of metal in the tins but from the tins themselves. Germany is very short of tins, so much so that she is sending out empty tins to be refilled with preserved meat, etc., in neutral countries, and is collecting empties high and low.

Now I quite see that this means a considerable amount of new organisation on your part, but the re-collection of these tins should present no huge difficulties in itself. Each commune can collect them fairly easily from the consumer each time the latter applies for a new ration, and all the way up the chain from the communes

back to Rotterdam you must have a large number of lighters and lorries returning empty which could be used to carry these empties. An arrangement with the N.O.T.[15] would be necessary in order to secure that all the empties brought out should fall again under their control, and we are instructing Sir A. Johnstone to consult with the N.O.T. and Mr. Young on this point in connection with the milk he now wants authorisation to export from Holland. As some compensation for the trouble all this will entail on you, I submit that you might get something from the resale of these empties in Holland or here.

Will you think over this and let me have your views?

Meanwhile, can you take steps to have the Commission in Belgium and France keep a careful eye on the Germans and stop them at once if they try to collect tins from house to house as they are doing in Germany itself?

Yours sincerely

EUSTACE PERCY

The three preceding documents and the six following illustrate the bearing of another important factor in the determination of the C.R.B. programs—the arbitrary restrictions placed from time to time by the British Government on the import program. These restrictions were the result, first, of the development of British blockade policy, which grew steadily in importance after the spring of 1915;[16] and, secondly, of the continuous pressure of a powerful opinion in the British Government which held that the Germans should have been compelled to bear the burden of Belgian relief and that the bearing of this burden by the Allies gave a military advantage to Germany. British authorities, therefore, watched the administration of relief with ceaseless vigilance. Reports that some of the Belgians were selling cattle and pigs to Germans led to an order from the Foreign Office on the 13th December 1915 suspending the Commission's imports of bacon and lard. The Commission's efforts to maintain the necessary program precipitated a long series of conferences and a voluminous correspondence. Hoover's detailed explanation of the methods of relief administration

[15] *Nederlandsche Overzee Trustmaatschappij*, formed at the suggestion of the British Government to centralize Dutch imports and exports. It was of great assistance to the Allies in maintaining the blockade.

[16] In March 1915 the British began the close blockade of Germany with the "Reprisals Order." This and subsequent Orders in Council tightened the blockade and led to sharp controversies with neutral governments, notably with the United States.

and his emphatic statement of the needs of the Belgian people before a subcommittee of the War Trade Advisory Committee[17] on the 23d December 1915 secured a temporary relaxation of the restrictions on fat imports. But on the 31st December the whole relief operation was threatened because of reported exports of Belgian foodstuffs to Germany.[18]

DOCUMENT NO. 73

Letter, GREY TO PAGE, *describing German violations of agreements and indicating the intention of the British Government to halt relief unless certain stipulations were accepted by the German authorities*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
31 December 1915

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

On various occasions I have felt obliged to address lengthy communications to you as patron, in your unofficial capacity, of the Commission for Relief in Belgium. A very critical situation has now arisen regarding the affairs of that Commission, and I must therefore put before you briefly the views of His Majesty's Government.

On December 31st, 1914, the German Government assured the United States Ambassador at Berlin in writing that they would thenceforward prohibit the requisitioning of "food or forage of any kind whatsoever which would require to be replaced by importations by the American Committee for Belgian Relief."

This undertaking has no doubt in large measure been observed in the letter; it has never been observed in the spirit, and even the letter has frequently been violated. I need give only one instance of direct infringement. Between November 1914 and July 1915, inclusive, the Commission distributed in Belgium six thousand six hundred and seventy-five tons, seven hundred and thirteen kilos of bacon and lard. Yet the German authorities have requisitioned tallow in Belgium and between June 1st and July 10th four thousand and seventy tons of fats and oils were shipped from Belgium to Germany.

It is not, however, of such direct infringements that I desire to speak now. The Germans have interpreted their solemn undertaking of December 31st as covering only such articles as were actually specifically named in the Commission's list of imports, and they have drained Belgium of all subsidiary articles which serve to diminish the consumption of staple foods. They have done more. They have made no attempt to conserve native supplies even of

[17] Blockade matters which at this time were in the hands of the War Trade Advisory Committee were later transferred to the Ministry of Blockade under Lord Robert Cecil.

[18] Document 73. The reorganization of the system of inspection and control to meet these British objections is described in chapter ii.

those staple foods which appear on the Commission's list of imports and, where they have not requisitioned those native stocks, they have freely purchased them when thrown on the market, and have exported them from Belgium, either to Germany or to the army in Flanders. Owing largely to lack of fodder the stock of pigs in Belgium appears to have diminished by some sixty per cent, and a large part of this diminution must be attributed to purchases by the German Army. In the same way, cattle are being bought up on a large scale, and are being sent south to the army. The resources of agriculture are diminished by the export of phosphates and guano. Only recently large quantities of Belgian sugar have been exported to Germany.

I am aware that the German authorities will adduce the comprehensive list of articles the export of which from Belgium is prohibited, as evidence that this account is inaccurate. But there is no reasonable doubt that exceptions are freely made to these prohibitions, in the case of exports to Germany, and it is also certain that they do not apply at all in practice to exports for the use of the German Army in France and Flanders.

These are merely instances. I will not pause to go over article by article the resources of the occupied territory which have been steadily depleted, nor need I refer to the wholesale requisitions of goods of all kinds which took place at Antwerp after the fall of that city. I only desire to make clear the consistent German policy during the last twelve months.

Needless to say, this policy has applied even more to industrial raw materials and manufactured articles than to foodstuffs. The German Government is reported to have recently made itself responsible for the statement that the economic condition of Belgium is nearly normal. I am astounded at this statement in view of facts which have become notorious. The textiles trades have either been deprived of all raw materials outright or have seen their finished products requisitioned in detail as they are completed. And what is true of the textile trades is true also of other Belgian industries.

Moreover, Germany has invented a method of facilitating this process. She has exacted and still exacts a levy of forty million francs (40,000,000) a month from Belgium in the form of a special note issue. This levy provides abundant cheap currency with which Belgian products may be purchased, and the country is thus drained of its resources in exchange for worthless paper of German invention.

The result of this process has been clearly seen in the last few months. The Commission, which had expected to be able to reduce its activities after the harvest, has increased them. It has made a series of new requests for import permits in respect of various fresh articles of food, and it has largely increased its importations of bacon and lard. It is planning to import large quantities of clothing for the destitute. This gradual expansion cannot continue, and within the last few days, as Your Excellency is aware, His Majesty's Government have felt themselves obliged to suspend temporarily the importation of various articles into Belgium by the Commission. The time has therefore arrived when the whole work must be placed on a more clearly defined basis.

Your Excellency will recollect that His Majesty's Government undertook to continue to issue permits for the Commission's imports of wheat into Belgium on condition that the Germans reserved the native harvest of wheat and rye strictly for the civil population. You will also recollect that His Majesty's Government expressed their inability to give any similar undertaking in regard to any other articles of import, and that the whole arrangement was made subject to one fixed stipulation that "no foodstuffs shall be imported which will, in effect, replace any foodstuffs requisitioned or purchased in Belgium by the German authorities." I must now inform Your Excellency that His Majesty's Government can no longer tolerate the present position.

They are therefore about to lay down a programme of imports for the Commission which will be regarded as final. However long the German occupation of Belgium may continue, this programme will in no circumstances be expanded. Further, His Majesty's Government must make the following stipulations, which appear to be the minimum necessary to safeguard the livelihood of the Belgian people:

1. The export of all foodstuffs and substances fit for use as food, whatsoever, including livestock and fodder of all kinds, and also all fertilizers, seeds, and agricultural stock of every sort, shall be absolutely prohibited from the territory administered by the Governor-General of Belgium to any destination whatever, with the one exception that the Commission for Relief in Belgium may be allowed to export to Northern France, for distribution there by them, foodstuffs of which there is a clear surplus over and above the present or future needs of Belgium.

2. The export of all articles of clothing and of all raw material for their manufacture shall be prohibited except to neutral countries, and then only after full provision has been made for the present and future needs of the civil population, including the destitute.

3. None of the articles above mentioned shall on any account be used by the German Army of occupation in Belgium.

4. These prohibitions shall be rigorously maintained without exception of any kind.

5. The Commission shall be allowed to exercise any control over the stocks mentioned in the preceding paragraphs which may be necessary in order to conserve them for the future, or make them available for the present needs of the population.

If these steps are not taken His Majesty's Government will hold themselves entitled to reconsider their whole attitude towards the Commission, since its work will have become, through no fault of its own, a method of replacement instead of one of relief, and an encouragement to the Germans to deplete the resources of the country. In that case I shall have no choice but to publish the documents showing the conditions which have obliged His Majesty's Government to change their views.

Sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 74

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *concerning pasturage of German cattle in Belgium and new restrictions on C.R.B. imports of fodder*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
25 January 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Our attention has been drawn to a notice in the *Cologne Gazette* of December 14th last stating, with reference to a communication made by the German Government to the Budget Committee, that in the spring of 1915 eighty thousand head of cattle were sent into Belgium to be pastured there and that similar action will be taken in the spring of 1916.

As you are aware, the German Authorities have requisitioned the crop of oats and hay in Belgium. If there is sufficient pasturage in Belgium to support eighty thousand head of German cattle, any lack of meat in Belgium must be clearly due to the action of the German Government and, in the presence of this fact, His Majesty's Government must hold the German Government responsible for the supply of meat to the population of Belgium.

Moreover, the Commission for Relief in Belgium is now allowed to import no fodder except maize to an amount of twenty thousand tons a month. As part of the resources of Belgium are apparently to be devoted to the maintenance of German livestock, a proceeding equivalent to the export of fodder which we have demanded shall cease, His Majesty's Government will be obliged to reconsider the permission given for the importation of this amount, and we must therefore ask you to import no more maize for fodder purposes until the situation is cleared up.

There is no objection to the importation of maize for human consumption being continued.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 75

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *setting forth restrictions on C.R.B. imports of soap to Northern France to prevent its use by Germans for military purposes*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
2 February 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

SOAP FOR NORTHERN FRANCE

Without prejudice to the list we shall finally and permanently fix, the Board of Trade will probably now instruct the International Commission to allow the export by you of your 1,000 tons a month for Northern France. But as this authorisation depends absolutely on the soap being of the *hard* variety not containing ingredients fit

for military purposes (the kind you now are buying here, I think), we want it to be understood for the present that you will buy *all* your soap in this country in order that we may be able to say at any time that we *know* that the soap is of the right kind.

I feel all these various small stipulations must give an undesirable impression of lack of confidence in you, but I beg you to believe that this is not at all the case and that it is merely a question of our being able to vouch for things of our own knowledge and not on hearsay.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 76

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *giving program authorized after reductions insisted on by British authorities*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
23 February 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I am directed to transmit to you the enclosed programme of supplies for Belgium and Northern France, to which it has been decided that your imports should for the present be reduced.

This programme has been submitted to the French and Belgian Governments for their observations with an explanatory statement of the grounds on which it is based.

I am directed to ask you to confine your imports within these limits till further notice, and in the case of all articles on the list you will of course only import when and as you are convinced that there is real need of them owing to exhaustion of native supplies.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

PROGRAMME OF MONTHLY IMPORTS BY THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

I. BELGIUM

1. For the whole population:
   54,000 tons of wheat
   250 tons of yeast materials.
2. For the destitute:
   2,400 tons bacon and lard
   3,000 tons peas and beans
   8,000 tons maize meal
   500 tons condensed milk.
   Clothing and clothing materials.
   Medical supplies (not including rubber goods).

3. For the Commission's staff:
20,000 litres of petrol
1,000 litres of lubricating oil
100 kilos of mineral transmission grease
and motor-car accessories.

II. NORTHERN FRANCE

16,000 tons of flour
1,600 tons of bacon and lard
1,000 tons of soap (hard)
2,200 tons of rice
1,650 tons of condensed milk
1,650 tons of beans and lentils
1,320 tons of sugar
1,100 tons of coffee
1,320 tons of salt
2,200 tons of cerealine (maize)

DOCUMENT NO. 77

Memorandum,[19] British Foreign Office to Villalobar, *stating objections to German reply*[20] *to British demands regarding exports from Belgium*

Foreign Office, London
28 February 1916

The demands made by His Majesty's Government in their note of December 31st are here taken seriatim, with comments upon the replies made by the German authorities.

1. His Majesty's Government demanded that "the export of all foodstuffs and substances fit for use as food whatsoever, including livestock and fodder of all kinds, and also all fertilisers, seeds, and agricultural stock of every sort, shall be absolutely prohibited from the territory administered by the Governor-General of Belgium to any destination whatever, with the one exception that the Commission for Relief in Belgium may be allowed to export to Northern France, for distribution there by them, foodstuffs of which there is a clear surplus over and above the present or future needs of Belgium."

In reply the German authorities agree, but without any mention of "agricultural stock" in general, and subject to three reservations:

a) That certain Belgian produce, of which there is a sufficiency in the country, and which Belgium normally exports, such as chicory, shall be exempted. His Majesty's Government recognise that there is some ground for this exemption, but they do not understand it in

[19] This memorandum accompanied Sir Edward Grey's letter to the Marquis de Villalobar of same date, which appears as Document 55 in chapter ii.

[20] The German reply was addressed both to Villalobar and to Whitlock. The German text appears in chapter xvii.

present circumstances in view of the German decrees of August 13th, September 16th, and October 23d ordering the seizure of all chicory roots and placing them under the control of the *"Zentral-Einkaufsgesellschaft für Belgien"*; and in view of the notorious efforts made by the German authorities to buy up chicory, vegetables, and fruit for German use. The German authorities in fact place an export tax on chicory and only allow its export to Holland "on proof of corresponding imports from Holland provided the condition of the German market allows it." If Belgium is so rich in such vegetables, it is clearly out of the question that His Majesty's Government should continue to allow large quantities of beans and peas to be imported into Belgium while native produce is being exported. The utmost concession which His Majesty's Government can make in this respect is that the export of such produce shall be allowed *to neutral countries after* the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National have had full opportunity to purchase all that is needed for the destitute.

b) That the German authorities shall still be free to take native foodstuffs by purchase for the use of the occupying army. It appears from this stipulation that the German authorities now openly and avowedly repudiate the guarantees given by the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at Berlin to the United States Ambassador on December 8th and December 31st, 1914, and General von Bissing's decree of January 21st, 1915, against requisitioning of foodstuffs and fodder. The promise of purchase in forced paper currency makes not the slightest difference to the fact of requisition. His Majesty's Government absolutely refuse to accept this proposal or to acquiesce in this attempt to make the Hague Conventions a charter of spoliation.

c) That certain stocks, said to be the property of the German Government, shall be exempted and shall be immediately exported from Belgium. As the 3,000 head of cattle mentioned in the list of these stores are the only things stated to be of German origin, it is to be presumed that the remaining items are of Belgium origin. They thus furnish further evidence of the violation of the German guarantees against requisitions referred to above. The 27,400 tons of fodder mentioned are doubtless the product of the last Belgian harvest. His Majesty's Government raise no objection to the export of the 3,000 head of cattle, if these are in fact of German origin, but if any of the other articles are exported, the Commission's imports will immediately be reduced by an equivalent amount.

The use of Belgian pasture for German cattle is absolutely inadmissible. When coupled with the wholesale requisitioning of the Belgian fodder crop, it represents an inhuman policy which, if continued, His Majesty's Government must publish for the information of the neutral world.

2. His Majesty's Government demanded that "the export of all articles of clothing and of all raw material for their manufacture shall be prohibited except to neutral countries, and then only after full provision has been made for the present and future needs of the civil population including the destitute."

The German reply is confined to a guarantee of clothing or clothing materials imported by the Relief Commission. The German authorities can hardly have misunderstood the clear demand of His Majesty's Government for a guarantee of domestic textiles precisely similar to that demanded in the case of foodstuffs, fodder, etc. His Majesty's Government insist on that guarantee.

3. His Majesty's Government demanded that "none of the articles above mentioned shall on any account be used by the German army of occupation in Belgium."

The direct refusal of this demand has already been dealt with above. Consent on the part of the German authorities is a condition *sine qua non* of the continuance of the work.

4. His Majesty's Government demanded that "these prohibitions shall be rigorously maintained without exception of any kind."

It may perhaps be assumed that consent to this is implicit in the German reply, within the limits of that reply.

5. His Majesty's Government demanded that "the Commission shall be allowed to exercise any control over the stocks mentioned in the preceding paragraphs which may be necessary in order to conserve them for the future, or make them available for the present needs of the population."

This is answered by a vague expression of willingness to concede the "control materially necessary." The object of the control demanded, so far as present necessities are concerned, is to make immediately available to the civil population and especially to the destitute such native products as pork and potatoes. His Majesty's Government attach no importance to words in this matter, but they cannot allow importations of such articles so long as the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium are unable, for whatever reason, to obtain existing native supplies.

The German reply contains a list showing the increase of livestock in Belgium. Annexed to the present memorandum is another list showing a strange decrease in the number of animals slaughtered in Belgium, in all cases except cows. His Majesty's Government do not recognize such figures as signs of prosperity nor can they accept the German figures, but it is clear that, if, as shown on the German list, the pigs in Belgium have increased by fifty-six per cent, there can be no valid reason for the present high price of pork in Belgium and no need for importations of bacon and lard by the Relief Commission, since Belgium does not in ordinary times of peace, when her stock of pigs is apparently less than in war time, import any considerable quantity of such articles. His Majesty's Government therefore propose entirely to stop such importations unless within a fortnight the Commission can show reason for their continuance.

Finally, the German reply is made conditional on undertakings from His Majesty's Government to leave the Commission complete freedom of importations and not to requisition ships chartered by them. If this condition were accepted, the German authorities would be free with impunity to turn every American out of Belgium and to impose all sorts of restrictions upon the grant of relief, such as are foreshadowed in one of the letters attached to the German reply.

His Majesty's Government must therefore absolutely refuse to give any undertakings whatever beyond those already given, and they will certainly retain the right to requisition at any time any ship flying the British flag.

It is unnecessary to draw attention to the extremely serious situation created by the German reply, nor to the urgency of securing a frank assent to the reasonable demands of His Majesty's Government in view of the extent of the infractions of previous undertakings revealed in that reply. It may be well to add that His Majesty's Government are in no way impressed by the anxiety displayed by the German authorities to ensure adequate importations by the Commission for Relief in Belgium in the interests of the Belgian population, nor will they be deterred by such expressions of solicitude from still further reducing the importations of the Commission below the new figures they have just been obliged to fix, if the German authorities delay any longer the conclusion of a proper arrangement.

DOCUMENT NO. 78

Letter, HOOVER TO MINISTER HYMANS, *describing the effect on the Belgian ration of the new British restrictions*

LONDON, 2 March 1916

His Excellency Paul Hymans
Belgian Minister, London

DEAR MR. HYMANS:

With respect to your enquiry as to the effective difference between the imports into Belgium as set out in the recent Foreign Office note and our previous quantities, we may give you the following notes.

The principal difference lies in the restriction of fodder and fat imports, with a view to pressure on the Germans. The question of human food is inextricably entangled with that of food for animals in its results as to local supplies of meat, milk, butter, etc., and it appears to us that the Foreign Office note is based on the assumption that the present negotiations with the Germans for the effective protection of the cattle will not succeed. If they did succeed there would surely be no reason for putting restrictions on the import of any foodstuffs into Belgium so long as they are actually and advantageously consumed by the civil population.

If we are to assume that the negotiations mentioned above will not succeed, the question becomes a matter of state policy as to the restrictions on certain commodities, in order to force an immediate consumption by the civil population of the whole of the animals, and you will agree with us that this is not a matter of dietetics.

There is another important change in the basis of relief implied in the Foreign Office note. It is now proposed that the relief be divided into two parts:

1. A supply of bread to the whole population.

2. The limitation of all other commodities imported to the sole consumption of the 3,250,000 wholly or partially destitute people. This question is one of a somewhat more involved character than might appear on the surface and we do not think anything can be gained by going into it. We will do the best we can with this basis.

We give you below a table showing the comparative distribution to the 3,250,000 under the program now proposed and that which we have had, in a general way, in use previously. We term one the "new ration" and the other the "old ration."

COMPARATIVE DISTRIBUTION

	New Ration		Old Ration	
	Total *(tons per month)*	Per diem *(grams)*	Total *(tons per month)*	Per diem *(grams)*
Flour	29,250	300	29,250	300
Maize	4,000*	40	8,000	80
Rice	*nil*	*nil*	5,000	50
Peas and beans	3,000	30	4,000	40
Bacon and lard	2,400	8	1,665	16.6
		16	3,350	33.5

* The yield for human consumption.

The new ration [also includes] 500 tons of condensed milk [for children exclusively].

We have had the dietetics of these two so-called rations worked out, with the following results:

COMPARATIVE VALUES

	New ration	Old ration
Total grams per diem	394	520
Total protein	49.1	59.2
Total fats	39.5	56.5
Total carbohydrates	256.1	328
Total calorific value	1,552	1,865

All experts differ on these points, but we are advised that the nominal minimum necessary to keep a population in health should be 2,500 calories. The difference between this and the amounts given above, i.e., 1,552 in one case and 1,865 in the other, must be made up from native foodstuffs, such as potatoes and vegetables. The whole question, therefore, degenerates into one simply of judgment as to what and how much the poorer classes in Belgium can obtain in supplement to the ration. As neither of these rations is sufficient without some such supplement, our judgment is that the larger ration is nearer the minimum which the people can possibly supplement with native supplies.

There is another general point in the whole of this thing and that is that there seems to be some misconception about forcing the consumption of native meat. If the whole imports of bacon and lard

were suppressed tomorrow very few of the 3,250,000 lower strata of society would ever consume any of the native animals, as these products are out of their reach and in consequence nearly the whole of these people would be denuded of fats.

Altogether, between the conflicting positions it seems to us that it is simply a matter of good judgment, prudence, and more or less compromise. If we were asked to compromise between these various situations we should make the following suggestions: i.e., on the hypothesis that cattle and export negotiations with the Germans will be unsuccessful:

a) That we group the whole of the cereals, wheat, maize, peas, beans, and rice, and place the total imports of cereals at 70,000 tons per month, exclusively for human consumption (except the milling by-products), leaving it to our judgment as to what proportion of each cereal we shall from time to time send in. This would be an increase of about 5,000 tons per month on the cereals permitted by the recent note, so as to include rice, which has been eliminated.

b) We would suggest an increase of the bacon and lard by 1,600 tons per month. This would permit a ration of 40 grams of fats per diem, instead of 24 grams as provided in the new ration and 50 grams in the old.

If the negotiations with the Germans to protect the whole of the meat and cattle in Belgium are successful, there can be no reasonable objection to our importing fodder, bacon, lard, etc., on the old basis.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

Belgium was as dependent on foreign sources for clothing as for food. The early appeals of the Commission for gifts of used clothing brought a generous response, and very considerable quantities were shipped into Belgium during the first months of relief. By January 1916 textiles and leather had practically disappeared in the occupied regions. The Commission purchased new textile materials, which with some accumulated stocks of used clothing were in Rotterdam and just about to be forwarded into Belgium, when on the 14th March the British Government forbade all textile imports for the reasons given in Document 79. Hoover did not accept this decision as irrevocable and continued to work for permission to forward the clothing supplies which the Belgians needed so badly. He won a considerable concession on the 14th June 1916, when the British consented to the import of the stocks accumulated in Rotterdam and elsewhere on condition that the C.R.B. establish complete control of manufacture and distribution of cloth-

ing and with the understanding that there be no further imports until the Germans reversed their policy of requisition of Belgian textiles.[21] In spite of this latter condition, the Commission succeeded in persuading the British authorities to permit additional clothing supplies in the later months of 1916.[22]

DOCUMENT NO. 79

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *directing discontinuance of C.R.B. imports of clothing and textiles into Belgium as result of German seizure of Belgian wool*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
14 March 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

There has just been brought to our notice a decree issued by the German Government in Belgium commanding the seizure of all raw or manufactured wool. All the stocks of these articles must be declared to the German authorities by the 15th of February under heavy penalties, and the whole must be sold to the German purchasing association at Brussels (*Kriegswollbedarf-Aktiengesellschaft*).

This decree coming some time after our demand that the export of textiles from Belgium should be prohibited, and synchronizing with General von Bissing's reply to our demands recently presented by the Marquis Villalobar, which totally disregards this particular condition, creates the very gravest situation, and we have no choice but to take appropriate measures at once. We must therefore ask you to stop absolutely, until the revocation of the decree, all imports by you of clothing materials into Belgium.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the United States Ambassador, the Spanish Ambassador, and the Belgian and Netherlands Ministers.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

While the matter of clothing imports was still in suspense the Commission by strenuous efforts secured an acutely needed increase in the "permitted imports." This increase the British granted after the Germans had been brought to agree to stop the shipment of animals, produce and fodder from Belgium to Germany and after Hoover had shown the Foreign Office the disastrous effects on the Belgian civilians of the recent import restrictions.

[21] Document 86.

[22] Documents 88, 89, 90.

DOCUMENT NO. 80

Letter, Hoover to Percy, *describing Belgian food situation and recommending increase of permitted imports*

London, 5 April 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

Dear Lord Eustace:

Belgian Program of Imports

I wish to put before you the result of my investigations into the food position in Belgium as the result of my recent inspection. I may say that I had the advantage of discussions with the whole of our forty American district and staff managers, as well as with the Belgian committees and authorities. As a result we earnestly recommend the following changes in the permitted imports:

	Menu of Feb. 23d *(tons per mo.)*	Menu to destitute *(grams per diem)*	Increases recommended* *(tons per mo.)*
Whole population, wheat...	54,000	300 (Flour)	*nil*
Impoverished (3,250,000)			
Bacon and lard.....	2,400	22	1,600
Peas and beans.....	3,000	30	*nil*
Maize	8,000	50	*nil*
Rice	*nil*	..	5,000
Condensed milk (for children)	500	..	....
Yeast materials	250	..	1,000
	68,150	..	7,600
Total.....			75,750

* Impoverished 5,000,000.

We strongly recommend that all cereals be made interchangeable as we simply cannot arrange precise shipments, and specific limitation on individual cereals has the effect of frequently decreasing the ration. The reasons for asking for these increases are two in number:

1. The enormous effective increase in impoverishment due to the extraordinary rise in prices in native foodstuffs during the last three months.

2. The diminution in local supplies of potatoes, etc., and the necessity for supplying a wider social area with substitutes.

The commodities other than flour are issued from our magazines upon *cartes de ménage* (specimen of which is attached), this being

issued by the local committees to those members of the communities either destitute or of limited means. The number of *cartes de ménage* had gradually increased during January and February and in your order to thoroughly revise the whole position and reduce consumers to a number comparable with those included in your order of February 23d, the old cards were called in and a new set issued, but despite all restrictions on the issue the total of these new cards outstanding is a little over 5,000,000. This means that the ration calculated above for the 3,250,000 is being spread over 5,000,000 and the increases proposed above are mostly to carry out mathematically the increased social range necessary to cover, with the exception of rice, which had to be eliminated from the previous program and which has now become absolutely critical owing to shortage in potatoes.

The legal maximum has been taken off meat prices in order to induce more meat to come into the market. As a result the price of meat has risen to Fr. 2.90 per kilo on hoof or equal to approximately Fr. 8 per kilo dressed. Also the prices of lard and bacon have risen in Brussels to from Fr. 12 to Fr. 15 per kilo in the shops and are not always obtainable (our price in the sale of rations being Frs. 2.20).

The partial requisition of fodder crops and the suppression of our fodder imports have led the peasants to feed potatoes to the cattle, partly in order to preserve them alive for cultivating the fields and partly to fatten for the market. A vicious circle has thus been set up, which has rendered what would have been an adequate supply of potatoes wholly deficient. Many towns, particularly the industrial centers, are now out of potatoes or only receive intermittent amounts when forced out of the peasants by requisition of the German authorities, for the peasants, in fright for their cattle feed, are withholding them from the market. In any event, it appears certain that the intermittent supplies will become totally exhausted after May 1st in larger cities. Some have been shipped from Holland, but I am informed that the surplus there is probably exhausted.

The actual number of people on the Secours lists receiving assistance to purchase their rations is not increasing perceptibly, but the long continued stagnation and extravagant rises in prices of native food supplies is at last hitting the middle class very hard and they are becoming more and more dependent upon cheaper priced imports in order to make ends meet. We simply cannot decrease the numbers of our issued *cartes de ménage* and the result of spreading the original ration, which was of a very limited nature, over so large a number and area would make acute suffering, especially in industrial centers. The town of Charleroi organized a deputation of 100 people to go to Brussels and present their position. Their petition was refused, but nevertheless the statement they made was of the most pathetic order and they are corroborated by our own investigations.

In the matter of the importation of yeast materials, I would call your attention to the fact that it takes about 2,000 tons of yeast per month to bake the Belgian and French bread, and to make this would require about 3,000 tons per month of materials. We are getting some yeast from Holland, and have some local supplies of barley,

which have been set aside by the proper committee for this purpose. We can get along now if we can import about 1,000 tons of stuff for this purpose, and experience shows that we can use maize to some extent in this work, so that we should like to choose our own cereals according to our abilities to secure supplies.

As regards potatoes, there is, I am informed, a large abundance in Ireland. We might arrange to import some into Belgium and Northern France. The normal consumption of potatoes for Belgium and Northern France would be over 100,000 tons per month, and even if we could get but a small part of this distributed, in the acute condition of the situation it would help to stem the outbreak of scurvy or other diseases until such time as other green vegetables come in at the latter part of June.

I am not raising the question of fodder imports, as it appears to us too late to do any good and shipping to handle such imports seems almost unobtainable. The people do need feed for their chickens for the next two or three months. We are organizing an arrangement whereby the fodder received from milling maize and wheat will be distributed through the communal committees only to such peasants as supply in return actual milk to the communal authorities, so as to endeavor to bring down the necessity to import condensed milk for the children; and if we had some fodder we might introduce an egg control of the same nature. I do not, however, think we need trouble with this latter matter at the present moment.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 81

Letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *describing food restrictions in Northern France and recommending increase in permitted imports*

LONDON, 5 April 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

NORTHERN FRANCE PROGRAM OF IMPORTS

I have been to Northern France to investigate present conditions. There have been three causes in operation militating against our revictualment of this region.

1. Reduction of permitted quantities, as per your direction of February 23d.
2. Failure of native food supplies.
3. Shortage of overseas transport.

The following table indicates our position and recommendations:

Commodity	Menu of Feb. 23d		Increase desired		
	Tons per month	Approximate grams per diem	Tons per month	Grams per diem	Total tons per month
Flour	16,000	250	3,300	50	19,300
Bacon and lard	1,600	25	1,600	25	3,200
Rice	2,200	33	2,200	33	4,400
Beans and lentils	1,650	25	.....	...	1,650
Maize	2,200	33	.....	...	2,200
Sugar	1,320	20	.....	...	1,320
Condensed milk for children	1,620	...	.....	...	1,620
Soap	1,000	...	.....	...	1,000
Coffee	1,100	...	.....	...	1,100
Salt	1,000	...	.....	...	1,000
Totals	29,690	386	7,100	108	36,790
Add local flour	.....	100	.....	...	.....
Total grams	.....	486	.....	...	.....

Calorific value, per diem, old menu	1,650
Calorific value of increase desired	450
Total calorific value	2,100

We strongly recommend that all cereals should be made interchangeable, including wheat, as well as those of secondary importance since this gives us vital flexibility in issuing rations.

During the month, we were unable from lack of transport to deliver the full amount of flour, the actual ration imported being 200 grams. The sugar was restricted to a 10-gram ration and the condensed milk, owing to inability to purchase, to under 1,000 tons total. We had in stock at Rotterdam and could have delivered more bacon and lard and subsidiary cereals, but of course could not do so under the restrictions.

You will recollect that the quantities specified in the order of February 23d meant a very serious reduction from the previous program, a reduction which had, of course, to be expressed in reduced rations to the people. The occasion which now obliges us to ask for increases is not only due to the effect of these reductions but also to the practical exhaustion of meat, potatoes, and other local supplementary articles. It is insisted to us that the population simply cannot be maintained in health on less than an average of 2,400 calories for the total population. Our proposals, as above, increase

the imports to 2,100 calories, leaving something to be made up by such local supplies as we may be able to assemble.

With the assistance of Messrs. Poland, Whitney, Wellington, and Richardson of our staff, I undertook an examination of the condition of the people in the cities of Lille, Valenciennes, and Roubaix, and the surrounding territory and districts, which comprise within an area of 1,235 square miles a present population of 1,260,000 civilians. We inspected the public markets, abbatoirs, provision shops, and meat shops, held conferences with the communal and municipal authorities of the larger cities, and moved freely over the district generally. Messrs. Wellington and Richardson are permanently located in the district, Mr. Whitney having general charge and spending a large part of his time there.

Meat.—We found the meat shops all closed and there had been no fresh meat on sale nor any distributed in the district either through shops or markets for 10 days, with three exceptions:

a) The shops that have recently and openly sold dog meat, now closed by the authorities.

b) A little Dutch meat, which reached Roubaix. Only two sides were exposed for sale in the whole town, the vender demanding an average of Fr. 12 per kilo, bones and all—about 5 shillings per pound.

c) Some meat that had been obtained by special exertions for the soup kitchens.

As showing the scarcity under this heading I may say that during 12 days of 16, in one commune, there had been no meat or grease base whatever to the soup. We are doing our utmost to get a small amount of meat from Belgium and Holland for the soup kitchens, but the utmost we can hope for is only equal to 10 grams of meat per day per capita and as to this we are almost in despair.

Incidentally, two of our party endeavored to obtain dinner in Lille, and after visiting four restaurants which had no meat, they found one where the proprietor was able to offer a single chicken at Fr. 16.

Potatoes.—The potatoes throughout the region are absolutely exhausted. One hundred kilos were offered in the Valenciennes market and sold for Fr. 85 (£34 per ton, as against £4 normal). The German authorities originally supplied 200 grams per capita per diem, but as the exhaustion of the supplying districts extended farther and farther afield, in both Belgium and Northern France, these shipments became first intermittent and finally negligible. We tried to get some potatoes from Holland, but failed. The food value of the small quantity of potatoes desired is of course of less importance than its value in preventing the spread of scurvy.

In every case among the numerous provision shops visited the shelves were absolutely bare. There were a few surviving articles de luxe displayed but they were obviously of no food importance. The total number of food animals seen in our whole journey was four cattle and fourteen chickens. The population receives no milk and butter supplies, and a package of Dutch margarine sold recently

in Lille for Fr. 16 per kilo. We saw no vegetables in the markets apart from a little celery and a good deal of dandelion leaves.

It is obvious that the population are dependent upon our imported ration, and it is clear that the March basis will not support life. The mortality statistics for the city of Lille for the past four months show an increase from 20 in December to 42 the first 25 days of March. Sickness has increased far beyond what the figures for mortality so far indicate and will be reflected in the more serious mortality statistics of later months.

In Roubaix riots broke out in one of the poorer communes upon the announcement of the reduction in the ration, and I am informed by the German authorities that they removed 2,000 men from the town to work for them in order to preserve tranquillity. They stated that these men have been sent to other districts to work on the roads.

There are no consequential leakages in the distribution. The goods all go to the communal magazines under seal and the mayors themselves report their arrivals and quantities to the American district managers and they, in turn, to our central organization. Every household has a *carte de ménage* issued by the committees, and this card entitles the holder to purchase or gift of the ration. The ration is posted publicly everywhere. As the population must starve or get the ration, they get it. Moreover, as it is less than life can endure upon, they do not part with it. The people are free to complain to the American district managers, and the Americans are in constant motion visiting the people. An indication of the tenacity with which the people cling to their pittance lies in the disparity in price of free lard (when obtainable), which is Fr. 15 per kilo, against our lard ration, where sold, at Fr. 2.20 per kilo.

In conclusion.—I feel my entire inability to draw for you an adequate picture of the unutterable depression and despair of these people. We are the only link to their kindred and their allies, and we are thus the only mouthpiece by which they may express to you their prayer for more help. My colleagues and myself feel that when the result of our representations last month was a reduction in their food instead of an increase as pleaded for, we have today to recognize that we have but proved our incapacity as their advocates.

The Allies have not fought this war, nor do they intend to fight it, on the basis of abandonment of solicitude for the helpless; yet we, who for over a year have been ceaselessly endeavoring to alleviate this mass of misery, are now forced to appear as an instrument of torture, since daily we must refuse the pleadings of a people whose sufferings will yet be told in terms reflecting neglect for which we are now daily blamed.

Yours faithfully

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 82

Letter, SIR EYRE A. CROWE TO HOOVER, *giving consent of the Foreign Office to imports recommended by Hoover*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON,
11 April 1916

Herbert Hoover, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

SIR:

With reference to the letter addressed by you to Lord Eustace Percy on the 5th instant, pointing out the scarcity of certain foodstuffs in Northern France as a result of the recent reduction in the ration, I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to state that His Majesty's Government have decided, in view of the considerations urged in your letter, to agree to the increases for which you ask, namely three thousand three hundred tons of flour, one thousand six hundred tons of bacon and lard, and two thousand two hundred tons of rice per month.

His Majesty's Government further agree that all cereals shall be made interchangeable, including wheat.

His Majesty's Government must however insist that the German authorities should furnish the two hundred grammes of potatoes per capita per diem as originally promised.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient, humble servant,

(Signed) EYRE A. CROWE

DOCUMENT NO. 83

Letter, VON DER LANCKEN TO WHITLOCK, *stating that he will take measures to forbid the export from the General Government (Belgium) of all foodstuffs (including animals), produce, and fodder*

BRUSSELS, 14 April 1916

To His Excellency Mr. Brand Whitlock,
Minister of the United States of America

DEAR SIR:

I have the honor to inform Your Excellency that I have submitted to the Governor-General the note which His Excellency the Minister of Spain was so kind as to send me under date of April 7th, 1916, in the name of Your Excellency and of the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands, as well as in his own, concerning the ravitaillement of Belgium by the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The Governor-General has instructed me to convey to Your Excellency his gratitude for the constant solicitude which you have

never ceased to show during the past 20 months, for the humanitarian labors of which you kindly accepted the patronage in conjunction with His Excellency the Minister of Spain and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands. The Governor-General is persuaded that the entire Belgian population share these sentiments.

The Governor-General has noted with much pleasure that the steps taken by His Excellency the Minister of Spain in the name of Your Excellency and of the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands, as well as in his own, have been successful in persuading the English Government not to stop the ravitaillement of the civil population in Belgium. His Excellency has shown himself all the more completely satisfied with this result in view of the fact that the new demands recently formulated by the English Government, which constituted a serious menace to the continuation of this ravitaillement, were based on erroneous information to the effect that the authorities in the territory administered by the Governor-General had not respected the promises made by His Excellency to the neutral Powers. Your Excellency is in a position to know that this assertion is untrue, and to confute it easily. In fact, the Governor-General remembers with satisfaction that Your Excellency, as well as your honored colleagues, have recognized on numerous occasions, last of all in your note of January 23d, 1916, the correct attitude observed by the authorities under his orders in the execution of the agreements entered into by him.

In view of the fact that the Governor-General recently even showed his readiness, in despite of certain German interests, to renounce the right, incontestably his by the terms of the Convention of The Hague, to provision the army of occupation with Belgian supplies, Your Excellency will infer the interest which the Governor-General feels in the well-being of the population of the country which he governs.

As a result of the negotiations of last February, and contrary to the information received by the English Government, the Governor-General has already issued, under date of March 1st, a regulation forbidding the exportation of foodstuffs and fodder. In accordance with the general import of the assurances last given the Government which Your Excellency represents, the Governor-General will resume and complete the measures already taken in this direction by new instructions *forbidding the exportation from the territory of the General Government of foodstuffs (including animals), produce, and fodder, serving for human alimentation and animals. He will forbid, moreover, the exportation from said territory of seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural supplies.* This prohibition will apply only to products of Belgian origin, it being especially understood that products of German origin which are now in the magazines of the military government, may be exported. Aside from the authorizations which may be accorded the Commission for Relief in Belgium for exportation, from the territory of the Governor-General to the north of France, of food, animals, and fodder, of which there may be a supply more than sufficient for consumption, there will be no exception to the above prohibition; the reservation agreed to by His Excellency the Minister of Spain with the English Government

being, however, made in this case for quantities of certain products of the Belgian soil which are more than sufficient for the needs of the population of the occupied territory of Belgium.

The Governor-General will give also to the Military Commissariat of the General Government, to ensure the success of the enterprise *(pour les effects consequents)*, instructions no longer to requisition, or buy freely, in the occupied territory of Belgium, for the needs of the army of occupation, any of the products mentioned above. As Your Excellency has certainly been convinced in the course of the recent negotiations, the Governor-General attaches greatest importance to the creation of a definite and clearly understood situation. It is therefore with great satisfaction that I have inferred, from the note which His Excellency the Minister of Spain was so kind as to send me, that Your Excellency, in the capacity of representative of your Government, will not consider occasional purchases of these products made individually by persons belonging to the army as contrary to the engagements entered into by the Governor-General, provided that these purchases are not at all systematic *(aucunement systématique)*, and are not made for the account of the Military Commissariat.

Having thus extended the scope of the obligations entered into by him previously toward the three neutral Powers, for the territory which he governs, the Governor-General is persuaded that, on its side, the Government which Your Excellency represents will assume toward him the guarantee that the British Government will henceforward definitively renounce the practice of interfering by requisition of ships, or in any other manner, with the ravitaillement of the civil population in Belgium. I hope that Your Excellency will secure from your Government authorization to confirm the justice of this position.

Your Excellency is in a position to know that the stipulations of this agreement, and of all those previously concluded with the Government which Your Excellency represents, are conscientiously observed by the authorities and the troops under the orders of His Excellency. The Governor-General is always ready to aid Your Excellency in every possible way in the accomplishment of this task. He ventures to express the hope that Your Excellency will kindly make known in the neutral and belligerent countries the evidence which you already have, and which you may later secure, in this connection, in order to refute the interested insinuations which are constantly appearing in these countries, and which can only result in harm to the enterprise of which you have kindly assumed patronage. In his anxiety to keep this enterprise free from all unjustifiable interference from the Powers at war with Germany, and in his desire to avoid all dealings with the latter, the Governor-General will continue to apply to Your Excellency in all questions connected therewith.

The Governor-General has noted with satisfaction that Your Excellency will see to it that the work of Secours and Alimentation placed under his patronage be kept strictly within the limits traced for its activity. This will permit the Governor-General to give, as in

the past, all his aid and all his protection to the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium under the patronage of Your Excellency, in order to permit the members of these two organizations to continue the work which they have been doing up to the present with such devotion in their humanitarian and charitable enterprise, destined to lighten for the population of Belgium the weight of the sufferings occasioned by the war.

I take this occasion to renew the assurance of my profound respect.

(Signed) LANCKEN

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 84

Letter, SIR M. DE BUNSEN TO AMBASSADOR PAGE, *enclosing memorandum by the Foreign Office regarding German agreement on prohibition of exports from Belgium and an increase in C.R.B. imports*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
6 May 1916

His Excellency, the Hon. Walter H. Page, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of a communication which Your Excellency was good enough to address to me on the 26th ultimo, enclosing a copy of a note addressed to the United States Minister at Brussels by Baron von der Lancken on behalf of the Governor-General in Belgium replying to the proposals that have been advanced by His Majesty's Government in regard to the prohibition of export of foodstuffs from Belgium and other matters.

I now have the honour to transmit to Your Excellency herewith a memorandum embodying the views of His Majesty's Government in regard to Baron von der Lancken's communication, and I should be grateful if Your Excellency would be good enough to cause a copy of this document to be communicated to the neutral Ministers at Brussels who are acting as patrons of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration,

Your Excellency's most obedient, humble Servant

(for the Secretary of State)
(Signed) MAURICE DE BUNSEN

MEMORANDUM

His Majesty's Government note with satisfaction that the Governor-General in Belgium undertakes to prohibit the export from territory within his jurisdiction of all foodstuffs and feeding stuffs, including seeds, fertilisers, and agricultural stock of all kinds, the only exceptions being (1) that the export of stocks of the above commodi-

ties of German origin may be allowed, (2) that the Commission for Relief in Belgium will be permitted to export to Northern France such food, cattle, and fodder as constitute an excess over the internal consumption in Belgium, and (3) that certain native Belgian products of which there is an admitted surplus may, on the basis of the letter addressed to the Marquis of Villalobar on March 21st last, be exported from Belgium.

As regards any surplus of commodities other than those specified under head (3) above, which may arise owing to the measures promised by the Governor-General, His Majesty's Government note that Baron von der Lancken's communication contains no reference as to their disposal other than that they may be utilised, in so far as they are required, for export to Northern France. His Majesty's Government had, however, stipulated that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should be allowed to exercise any control over such stocks which may be necessary in order to conserve them for the future or to make them available for the present needs of the population. It will therefore be necessary, in the interests of all parties concerned, to set up some form of control over the native produce of the forthcoming season similar to that arranged in 1914 in regard to breadstuffs, such control to include all the livestock and dairy produce in the country; the bodies entrusted with this control will be in the best position to determine what commodities are in excess of the needs of the population.

His Majesty's Government are further glad to note the Governor-General's declaration that he will give orders to the quartermaster's department that none of the Belgian produce mentioned in the second paragraph may be either requisitioned or purchased for the use of the occupying army. In return for this assurance His Majesty's Government now agree to raise no objection to the incidental purchase by individual soldiers of Belgian native produce, provided that such individual purchases are not in any way systematic and do not, in fact, come in any way within the purview or control of the quartermaster's department or any other military authority.

Baron von der Lancken's communication contains a passage in which the hope is expressed that the United States Government will give the Governor-General a guarantee that henceforward the British Government will finally abstain from impeding, either by means of the requisitioning of ships or in any other manner, the revictualing of the civil population of Belgium. His Majesty's Government must in the first instance emphatically deny that they have ever taken any measures for impeding the revictualing of the Belgian population within the limits to which they have agreed; they have always been desirous of co-operating in the most open and cordial manner with the Commission for Relief in Belgium, in whose operations they repose complete reliance, and though they have been obliged at certain times to requisition British ships which the Belgian Relief Commission desired to employ this has been done to meet the urgent necessities of the moment and to ease some temporary shortage of freight, for the existence of which they cannot be held responsible. As has already been pointed out in the memorandum

communicated to the Marquis de Villalobar on February 28th last, His Majesty's Government regret that they cannot relinquish their sovereign right to requisition at any time any ship flying the British flag. Subject to this reservation, the Commission may count on continuing to receive in the future as they have received in the past, the loyal co-operation and assistance of His Majesty's Government in the great humanitarian work which they have undertaken, and it is hoped that the consideration which may have inspired the requirement of the German authorities in regard to requisitioning, will be favourably affected by the negotiations at present in progress for the use by the Relief Commission of German interned vessels.

The Belgian Minister at this Court and the Commission for Relief have recently pressed upon me extensive proposals for the increase in the present rations. After a careful examination of these proposals and acting on the assumption that the undertakings given by the Governor-General in Belgium will rapidly be carried into effect, His Majesty's Government have decided to increase the rations in the sense desired by the Commission. It will of course be understood that the continuance of the rations on the higher scale must be dependent on the exercise of a control over native Belgian produce on the lines indicated above.

DOCUMENT NO. 85

Letter, DE BUNSEN TO HOOVER, *giving British consent to increase in C.R.B. imports*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON, 10 May 1916

H. C. Hoover, Esq.

SIR:

With reference to your letter of the 5th ultimo putting forward various proposals for an increase in the present Belgian ration, I am directed by Secretary Sir Edward Grey to state that, after full consideration of the matter, His Majesty's Government have agreed to the revised programme as suggested by you, viz:

Four thousand tons of bacon and lard per month (instead of 2,400 tons), 5,000 tons of rice (for which there was no previous allowance), and 1,000 tons of yeast materials per month (instead of 250 tons).

No objection will be raised to making all cereals interchangeable, provided the actual imports of maize are not allowed to exceed 8,000 tons per month and provided it is clearly intimated to this Office on each occasion when it is proposed to substitute one cereal for another. The rice will of course be cleaned rice.

As regards your proposal to import potatoes from Ireland, Lord Robert Cecil would be glad to be informed in the first instance what is the maximum quantity which the Commission would propose to ship per month, so that enquiry may be made in the proper quarter whether the amounts can be spared from this country.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant

(Signed) MAURICE DE BUNSEN

This authorization to increase imports represents the successful termination of difficult negotiations with the Germans on the one hand and the British on the other, with the continuation of relief to the Belgians in the balance. These negotiations illustrate the part which the C.R.B. played as the neutral representative of Belgian interests which were repeatedly threatened in the struggle of the British to maintain and the Germans to break down the blockade.

The permission given to consider cereals interchangeable was of great practical importance, since it was difficult and sometimes impossible to purchase monthly specified quantities of maize, beans and peas, and rice, as these commodities came into the market at various seasons and there were times when at least one of them was quite unobtainable.

DOCUMENT NO. 86

Letter, GREY TO PAGE, *concerning German seizure of textiles; permission to C.R.B. to import clothing in hand, but interdiction of all future imports of textiles*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON, 14 June 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

On December 31st last I had the honour of communicating to you certain demands which His Majesty's Government felt obliged to make on the German Government in connection with the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Among other things, I then demanded the prohibition of the export of all clothing and clothing materials from Belgium, and at the end of my note I said that, unless the German authorities would consent to what I regarded as the reasonable demands of the Allies, I should be obliged to publish the correspondence regarding the Commission's work.

On March 14th I was obliged to inform you that owing to the seizures of textile materials carried out by the Germans in Belgium I could no longer allow the importation of clothing and clothing materials by the Relief Commission into Belgium, and I expressed my astonishment that these seizures had been put into force at the very moment when the demands of the Allies were before the German Government.

Since that time the German Government have acceded to the demands made in my note of December 31st, so far as foodstuffs, fodder, fertilisers, and agricultural stock are concerned, but they have refused to yield in any way to the demand regarding clothing materials. If it were not that special considerations arise in regard to stocks of clothing already collected by the Commission, I should

have been obliged to make permanent the embargo on these stocks, but I cannot forget that they are the product of appeals for contributions of this kind made by the Relief Commission in the United States last Autumn, and His Majesty's Government are most reluctant to defeat the charitable endeavours of the American public who answered these appeals. I have therefore informed the Commission that His Majesty's Government raise no objection to the importation into Belgium of certain stocks of clothing already in their possession at Rotterdam, in England, and in the United States, to be distributed under the strict system of control guaranteed by the Commission, but, in view of the German seizures above mentioned, no further authorisation of this kind can be given and, from now until the end of the war, the Allied Governments must impose an absolute prohibition on the importation into Belgium by the Relief Commission of clothing or clothing materials of any kind unless and until the German Government reverse their recent policy and restore to the people of Belgium the stocks of such materials which they have taken from them.

In accordance with the statement made in my note of December 31st I am taking steps to publish the present communication immediately for the information of all those interested in the condition of Belgium.

Believe me,
My dear Ambassador,
Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 87

Letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *reviewing the situation in Belgium and Northern France in respect to clothing and boots*

LONDON, 28 September 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

CLOTHING SITUATION

It seems to me desirable to review the probable clothing situation, assuming that we are to go on with this business until next summer.

Belgium.—We have a considerable stock of clothing goods and ready-made clothing in Belgium at the present moment, as a result of the sudden introduction of the shipments which have been so long held up. It is our belief that if we could import secondhand clothing to supplement this supply we should be able to eke out our textiles for Belgium for the next eight or ten months. Secondhand clothing is an advantage in that it gives more work for the *ouvroirs,* which are distributed around over the country, than would piece goods; and in any event, by working the two up together we

could extend the situation to much greater effect. Therefore we need to have the ban on Belgium removed to the extent that we might import secondhand clothing.

The question of shoes for women and children is one of the most distressing situations we have to meet at the present time, more especially for children under 6 to 7 years of age, for whom the use of sabots is, on medical grounds, almost prohibited. In Brussels alone, a canvass of the schools to determine the number of shoes which are absolutely required showed something like 80,000 pairs needed against something under 15,000 pairs available in our present supplies for distribution. Our idea is, if you agree, that we should purchase and import a certain amount of ready-made shoes for women and children, that we should endeavor to secure secondhand shoes and that we should import a certain amount of leather for their repair, as the various *ouvroirs* each has a shoe-repair shop and can pass out a great deal in this way.

Northern France.—There is no prohibition of the import of either clothing materials or shoes for women and children here, and we are anxious to purchase a further supply of textiles to be made up in Northern France. We laid this matter before you some time ago, and, as I understand, the only point at issue is whether or not we should be allowed to purchase the materials in and export them from this country.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 88

Letter, POLAND TO PERCY, *concerning the import of discarded military boots for farm laborers in Northern France*

LONDON, 12 October 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

MILITARY BOOTS FOR NORTHERN FRANCE

I beg to hand you herewith copy of a letter sent to Mr. Chevrillon concerning secondhand boots. These are discarded military boots which are being collected and worked over in order to make them suitable for the peasantry. I am sending you a pair in a separate package, to show just the character of the worked-over product. They are considered entirely unsuitable for soldier wear, but would supply a very great need for farm laborers, etc., in Northern France. We should like to know whether this worked-over stock would be considered by the Foreign Office as proper to send into Northern France, even in view of the interdiction in regard to shipments of military boots.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 89

Letter, PERCY TO POLAND, *reporting opposition of military authorities to C.R.B. import of boots which might be used by Germans*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
21 October 1916

DEAR MR. POLAND:

With reference to your letter of October 12th about military boots for Northern France, I return the samples to you herewith. I am afraid the decision of our military experts is that both these boots would be very useful to the Germans and that they should not be allowed to go anywhere within reach of the Germans. You should bear in mind that the present condition of German soldiers' boots makes it very unsafe to assume that nothing that is not a distinctively military boot will be of service to them. We believe at least one of the samples would be a positive godsend to many German regiments.

Yours sincerely
(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 90

Letter, PERCY TO POLAND, *giving British consent to C.R.B. importations of men's boots and blankets*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
26 December 1916

DEAR MR. POLAND:

1. With reference to previous correspondence regarding fifty-six thousand pairs of men's boots which you now have at Rotterdam and which you desire to send into Northern France, and further with reference to your letter of November 18th regarding one hundred thousand woolen blankets for Northern France, I am directed to inform you that at the express request of the French Government we are now prepared to allow the importation of these articles.

2. Both boots and blankets should if possible be stamped or branded or otherwise labelled in some indelible way, and every precaution should be taken and every possible guarantee exacted from the Germans so as to ensure that none of these articles are used for any other purposes than for the destitute civilian population for whom they are intended. You should also take all possible measures to see that these importations do not in fact constitute replacement of goods now in Northern France which might be taken by the occupying authorities for their own use.

Yours sincerely
(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

In spite of the troubles which hampered the fulfilment of the program in 1916, the Commission had during its second year placed in Rotterdam 1,300,000 tons of supplies, valued

at $116,000,000. Monthly imports varied as a result of the restrictions of the British authorities. Thus in March 1916 only 64,000 tons were imported, as against a monthly average for the year of 106,000 tons.[23] Gifts in kind, as had been anticipated, had fallen to 13,249 tons. This was in part due to the Commission's policy, in the face of new conditions, of emphasizing the need of financial assistance rather than of gifts in kind. Appeals for used clothing were an exception to this policy.

3. *The Third Year. November 1916–October 1917*

The two documents which follow describe the situation which confronted the Commission at the commencement of its third year. Hoover's detailed report on conditions in Belgium showed the extent and effect of the decrease in the production of native products and demonstrated the need of increased imports. The British Government's prompt approval of Hoover's program was the auspicious beginning of what proved to be the most difficult year of the Commission's life.

DOCUMENT NO. 91

Letters, HOOVER TO VILLALOBAR AND TO WHITLOCK, *stating the critical situation facing Belgium in winter of 1916–1917*

BRUSSELS, 15 September 1916

His Excellency Marquis de Villalobar,
Spanish Minister, Brussels

His Excellency Brand Whitlock,
American Minister, Brussels

MY DEAR MARQUIS:

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

As the result of a general inquiry by the C.R.B. representatives as to the native food outlook, we are convinced:

a) The potato crop which last year proved insufficient for the population will next year be much worse, as the crop is 30 per cent below that of last year.

b) The breadstuff crops are fully 20 per cent under last year.

c) It is now proved that Belgian cattle which normally lived largely upon cereal fodders cannot be fattened on green feed. The cattle have therefore, owing to absence of fodder imports, failed to take on consequential weight during the summer. The meat supply will be much less than heretofore, and as there is no systematic dis-

[23] See Gay, *Statistics,* pp. 54–76.

tribution except through the soup, it will in any event benefit but a small class of the better-to-do.

d) The lack of any general system of distribution allows the indigenous fats to fall in the main into the hands of the well-to-do.

e) The industrial classes already show greatly decreased vitality, increased tuberculosis, and other bad signs.

In consequence of all this, the imports of food must during the winter rise to much larger quantities than anything we have hitherto contemplated, and this in the face of the highest prices the world has ever known.

Yours very truly

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 92

Letter and memorandum, HOOVER TO PERCY, *describing the situation in Belgium and the increased program desired by the C.R.B.*

LONDON, 7 October 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

Please find enclosed herewith a report on the whole Belgian situation which expresses all our desires and hopes and, as near as we can arrive at them, the reasons therefor. It has been written with a view to giving a complete picture of the whole situation to those who are not so familiar with the ravitaillement as you are yourself.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

REPORT ON THE FOOD POSITION IN BELGIUM WITH RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM

I

The present population in Belgium is estimated (from bread issues) at 7,500,000, divided into two political areas:

The "Occupation Zone," population 5,800,000
The "Etappen," population 1,700,000

The monthly imports at present permitted to the whole area are:

Item	Tons
Wheat	54,000
Maize	8,000
Peas and beans	3,000
Bacon and lard	4,000
Rice	5,000
Cocoa	350
Condensed milk	500

The whole of the native breadstuffs are in control of the Relief Organization and are combined with the native wheat, and a rigid bread ration is issued to the entire population. The other imports are issued upon a ration (*carte de ménage*) to a more limited number of people who are presumed unable to secure native supplies or in any event only partial supply. In addition the Relief Organization supplements the diet of more destitute members of the *carte de ménage* class by public feeding through soup for adults, by canteens for infant children, and by serving a meal each day in the schools. Approximately 6,000,000 people have a *carte de ménage* and 2,820,000 receive supplementary help through public kitchens.

II

In the consideration of a revised import program for the coming year, three outstanding new factors must be given weight:

a) As shown by Dr. Lucas' investigation, the industrial and minor commercial adults and the children over five years of age have been steadily underfed during the past year, and while their vitality has not been lowered to the breaking point, they cannot face another year on such a margin.

b) The new potato crop is 30 per cent to 40 per cent short of last year. The available local breadstuff harvest in the Occupation Zone is diminished by about 25 per cent, although this is compensated for by the larger German guarantees in the Etappen. The local meat supplies are again most seriously reduced, and the local fat supplies are also much diminished.

c) The considerable filtration of Dutch fish, cheese, etc., has almost ceased by virtue of the German prohibitions.

III

The coming year's outlook for native food supplies may be roughly summarized as follows:

Potatoes.—Owing to the shortage of the potato crop in the Occupation Zone it seems unlikely that there will be more than 350 grams per diem per capita available for general distribution. The harvest in the Etappen is larger than this, and the German authorities have undertaken to guarantee 400 grams per diem to the population, the surplus going over to Northern France.

Breadstuffs.—The cereal crop in the Occupation Zone last year, after deducting seed and the amounts allowed to producers for their own support (about 72,000 tons), gave an actual net available tonnage to the Relief Organization of approximately 230,000 tons. The net surplus from this year's harvest is estimated at 170,000 tons or, as the distribution is at the rate of 1/15 per month, equal to about 11,000 tons per month.

The harvest in the Etappen is probably 60,000 tons, and the Germans are guaranteeing approximately 12,400 tons per month, or

a total of 148,000 tons, part of which must come from Northern France. There are thus roughly 30,000 tons of native wheat per month available on all counts.

Meat.—The following table shows the animals killed in the principal abattoirs for three periods:

ANIMALS KILLED IN THE PRINCIPAL ABATTOIRS

	From 1st Jan. to 31st July 1914	From 1st Jan. to 31st July 1915	From 1st to 29th Feb. 1916
Cows	42,364	50,876	41,164
Oxen	24,955	15,025	18,447
Heifers	13,686	10,742	14,989
Bullocks	17,465	11,020	9,988
Calves	98,926	69,765	51,230
Sheep	96,500	25,770	35,876
Pigs	216,087	110,792	64,767
Horses	6,429	4,066	2,554
Goats	2,452	757	1,515
Total	518,864	298,813	240,530
Average kilos per month	8,083,000	5,003,000	4,000,000

The following table also shows the comparative killings in the two principal abattoirs for a more recent period compared to the last above:

MORE RECENT KILLINGS

	From 1st Jan. to 31st July 1916 (7 months)	From 1st Aug. 1915 to 28th Feb. 1916 (7 months)	From 1st Mar. to 31st Aug. 1916 (6 months)
Brussels			
Cows	10,784	8,750	7,708
Oxen	4,694	6,485	2,680
Heifers	.....	.....	.....
Bulls	2,107	2,039	1,182
Calves	15,152	12,597	7,748
Sheep	4,007	4,440	1,370
Pigs	14,410	7,650	4,440
Horses	1,273	710	490
Goats	.....	170	310
Total	52,427	42,841	25,928

MORE RECENT KILLINGS (*Continued*)

	From 1st Jan. to 31st July 1916 (7 months)	From 1st Aug. 1915 to 28th Feb. 1916 (7 months)	From 1st Mar. to 31st Aug. 1916 (6 months)
Cureghem			
Cows	11,443	9,963	7,058
Oxen	4,701	5,755	2,010
Heifers	.....	.....	.....
Bulls	2,108	1,723	1,487
Calves	17,117	13,526	6,946
Sheep	9,168	13,987	3,932
Pigs	25,552	12,544	12,715
Horses	645	279	192
Goats and lambs	.....	.....	.....
Total	70,734	57,777	34,340

From these data and our other investigations we are convinced that the total meat killed does not now exceed 3,500 tons per month for the whole of Belgium, and on an even distribution this would be less than 17 grams per capita, per diem, but as the price of meat has risen to from Frs. 8 to 12 per kilo and there is no physical possibility of an even distribution, it simply means that the producers and well-to-do classes get the whole of this meat, less the amount which we buy at these high prices for the soup kitchens (for which we need about 800 tons per month).

Fats.—Fat supplies, outside those contained in the above meat, have now been reduced to a very low ebb. As shown above, there is a steady diminution in the number of animals; but of equal importance is the fact that Belgian animals are largely dependent upon cereal fodder, which has been for months non-existent. The meat, fat, and butter and milk producing capacity per head is therefore greatly reduced. The totals collected by the German Fat Central, which requires the total tallow from all abattoirs, average less than 50 tons per month. If we assume the outside figure of 500,000 milk cattle still left (against 1,000,000 before the war), the theoretical dairy fats available in butter and cheese are now less than 1,000 tons per month. Despite the legal price of 6 francs, the real price of butter is now from 9 to 12 francs, and in consequence this supply of fats also is available principally to the producers and the well-to-do. Some further theoretical fats may be estimated for the skimmed milk, but it reaches the industrial and urban population mainly through the Relief Organization and then to the children only.

Sugar.—The sugar available at present is 4,000 tons per month. It is issued by the Sugar Central to the retail trade at a price of Frs. 1 to 2 per kilo, so that the lower social strata do not see much of it.

Other native supplies.—There is no doubt an appreciable amount of vegetables and poultry products in Belgium, but these are, again, largely consumed by the producers and well-to-do. The number of producers of these products is, however, very considerable owing to the wide distribution of small holdings.

IV

That there is effective shortage of present supplies can be adduced from combining the above native supplies with the present imports:

	Tons monthly
Native	
Meat	3,500
Fats	1,000
Potatoes	75,000
Sugar	4,000
Wheat and rye	30,000
Imports	
Wheat	54,000
Maize	8,000
Peas and beans	3,000
Bacon and lard	4,000
Rice	5,000
Cocoa	350
Condensed milk	500

The following table shows:

A. The dietetic results of these totals

B. The minimum dietetic requirements of the population after giving weight to partial unemployment and reduction to "man-power"

C. The deficiency

	A *(Grams per diem)*	B *(Grams per diem)*	C *(Grams per diem)*
Protein	46	70	24
Fats	42	50	8
Carbohydrates	328	410	82
Total calories	1,737	2,400	663

No doubt the poultry and the sundry vegetables would add something to this total, but the amount would not be very important. If we adopt Professor Thompson's views of the proportion of these articles in the United Kingdom dietary and apply them to Belgian conditions it would amount to less than 150 calories per diem per capita. This deficiency of the available food supplies, as brought out by the above figures, represents a monthly shortage in:

	Tons
Protein	5,400
Fats	1,800
Carbohydrates	18,450

for which deficiency some combination of bacon, lard, preserved fish, peas, beans, and wheat needs to be found.

V

While the above is an interesting proof of the deficiency in total supplies, the actual problem is far different. There is no equitable distribution of the native food supplies except the breadstuffs and, in a rough way, the potatoes. The other native supplies are absorbed in the main, as stated above, by the agricultural producers and the well-to-do population, who live more or less up to normal, consuming probably more than 3,000 calories; and therefore the workers and minor commercial classes are dependent, except for breadstuff and potatoes, mainly upon imports. The Relief Organization attempts to meet this situation by issuing *cartes de ménage* to a limited social range, but the pressure upon the communal committees during the past year has resulted in the increase of these cards from about 3,500,000 to about 6,000,000.

The *carte de ménage* class no doubt to some extent overlaps with the producers and the well-to-do, and no doubt many *carte de ménage* holders, especially among small landowners, do obtain some native supplies. It is impossible to follow every household every day and see that no overlap occurs. The ration secured by this *carte de ménage* class from present imports plus native potatoes and breadstuffs works out at the following ration over 6,000,000 people:

Commodity	Grams per capita per diem				
	Ration	Protein	Fats	Carbohydrates	Calories
Bread	400	31.6	4.4	200	992
Potatoes	350	3.5	4.5	66.5	294
Bacon and lard	22	.8	19.5	.....	185
Maize products	27	1.2	.3	22.4	98
Peas and beans	22	5.2	.4	12.7	78
Rice	28	.2	.1	21.8	100
Total	849	42.5	29.2	323.4	1,747
Adopted minimum standard (as above)	...	70.	50.	410.	2,400
Giving a shortage of	...	40%	42%	21%	27%

Thus, this class, representing the great majority of the people, where no other native supplies are available, are obviously fully 25 per cent under minimum standards of feeding.

VI

We must assume that some portion of the *carte de ménage* holders are able to obtain some additional native food supplies, and, rather

than increase the general *carte de ménage* distribution, our idea is to approach the problem by way of supplemental feeding to that section of the population which is the most necessitous and the least likely to secure any such native supplement. This we propose to do by increasing the bread ration to certain classes and by expanding the food supplies through the soup kitchens. If the basic ration of flour to the whole population be held as at present at 300 grams of flour (400 grams of bread), an addition of 50 grams of flour to workers would greatly alleviate pressure in this direction. This ration will imply a total wheat import during next year of about 58,000 to 59,000 tons per month.

We estimate the number of people on the communal soup kitchens at 1,700,000, the number of children fed by canteens at 120,000, and the children who will participate in the public school feeding at 1,000,000, or approximately 2,820,000 whose *carte de ménage* ration must be further supplemented by expanding the operation of these relief organs.

In order in this manner to bring up the food value of these classes, which are the ones most necessary to reach, to an effective amount, we propose that the soup kitchens should be supplied with the following supplementary commodities:

Commodity	Grams per diem	Tons per month
Native meat	10	846
Imported bacon and lard	20	1,686
Cheese	6	507
Preserved fish	10	846
	46	3,885

Assuming the adults upon these soup kitchens receive the extra 50 grams of flour, the total ration to this section of the population would be:

Grams per capita per diem	Protein	Fats	Carbohydrates	Calories
940	54	52	358	2,145

This is still too low, but the large proportion of children will tend to liberate some proportion in favor of the adults.

In addition to the above we propose to import, for the children, 500 tons of condensed milk and 350 tons of cocoa.

The above provision of 10 grams of meat per capita for the soup kitchens is an absolute necessity and so far as possible will be obtained locally. It will be necessary, however, especially in the Etappen, to import some meat, and a provision should be made for the importation of at least 500 tons per month of preserved meat from abroad or fresh meat from Holland if it should become critically necessary.

Furthermore, the outbreak of skin diseases renders the importation of some soap absolutely necessary. Coffee is now wholly exhausted in Belgium and the people are using roasted cereals—which would answer if a small amount of real coffee could be mixed therein.

VII

The net result of this change on the imports is indicated by the following table:

Commodities	Metric tons per month			Cost per ton £ sterling	Approximate cost per month £ sterling
	Present permitted importation	Additional	Total		
Bacon and lard	4,000	1,686	5,686	75	426,450
Peas and beans	3,000	.....	3,000	27	81,000
Cheese	.....	500	500	110	55,000
Cocoa	350	.....	350	95	33,250
Coffee	.....	1,100	1,100	60	66,000
Fish, preserved	.....	850	850	40	34,000
Maize	8,000	.....	8,000	11	88,000
Meat	.....	500	500	55	27,500
Milk, condensed	500	500	1,000	50	50,000
Rice	5,000	.....	5,000	17	85,000
Soap	.....	1,000	1,000	31	31,000
Wheat	54,000	5,000	59,000	18	1,062,000
Yeast materials	1,000	.....	1,000	30	30,000
Totals	75,850	11,136	86,986		2,069,200

It may be observed that the above additions do not provide all the apparent deficiencies in supplies as shown in IV but still leave a wide margin to be furnished by poultry and sundry vegetables.

VIII

Of the above total estimated cost of £2,069,200 approximately £330,000 is due to the increase in imports proposed. The cost of the whole program has been materially affected by the great rise in prices during the past five months, this rise representing roughly about £400,000. Out of the total of £2,069,200 the Commission hopes to be able to obtain about £150,000 per month from charity and commercial exchange, and therefore the need from subsidies represents about £1,900,000, or an increase of about £900,000 over the present subsidies.

DOCUMENT NO. 93

Letter and memorandum, PERCY TO HOOVER, *recapitulating increases in C.R.B. imports authorized by the British government*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
11 November 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

1. With reference to Sir E. Crowe's letter to you of October 26th in regard to the increase in the Belgian ration, I now transmit to you herewith a complete revised table of all your rations in order to put the situation on a clear basis.

2. There seems to have been a slight mistake in Sir E. Crowe's letter to you of the 26th in regard to soap. You asked for one thousand tons of soap for Belgium and by a clerical error we authorised one thousand one hundred tons. In the annexed table I have corrected this error.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

MEMORANDUM

RELIEF RATIONS FOR BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE

	Metric Tons
Belgium	
Wheat	59,000
Maize	8,000
Rice	5,000
Peas and beans	3,000
Meat	500
Fish	850
Bacon and lard	5,686
Cheese	500
Condensed milk	1,000
Cocoa	350
Coffee	1,100
Yeast materials	1,000
Soap	1,000
Clothing and clothing materials	
Medical supplies (not including rubber goods)	
For the Commission's staff	
Petrol	20,000 liters[a]
Lubricating oil	1,000 liters
Mineral transmission grease	100 kilos
Motor car accessories	

	Metric Tons
Northern France	
Flour	19,300[b]
Cerealine (maize)	2,200
Rice	4,400
Peas and beans	1,650
Meat	1,800
Fish	500
Bacon and lard	3,200
Cheese	720
Butter	360
Condensed milk	1,650
Cocoa	350
Coffee	1,100
Sugar	1,320
Soap	1,000

[a] Plus 650 liters per month for Consulate.
[b] Equivalent to 23,500 tons of wheat.

At the end of 1916 the position of the Commission was stronger than at any previous time. Administrative machinery inside and outside of Belgium was running smoothly; the prestige of the Commission was greater than ever; and relations with the belligerents were on a generally satisfactory basis. But this clear sky had its cloud, which with the passing months of 1916 had grown ominously larger. This cloud was the shortage of shipping. Losses from submarines and mines, the steadily increasing demands of the Allies, the growing reluctance of neutrals to permit the use of their ships in the dangerous waters of the North Sea and the Channel contributed to this condition, which reached its crisis on 1st February 1917 when the Germans began their unrestricted U-boat campaign.

Two months after the Germans embarked on this desperate policy the United States became a belligerent, necessitating the withdrawal of Americans from Belgium and the assumption of their functions by Dutch and Spanish nationals.[24] An immediate effect of the German declaration was the closing of the North Sea and the waters around the British Isles and the Atlantic coast of France to C.R.B. ships and the withdrawal of neutral ships from the service of the Commission. The struggle to secure ships enough to main-

[24] The external organization of the C.R.B. continued to perform its usual functions with minor readjustments. See chapter xii.

tain a flow of food into the occupied regions is revealed in chapter v; here it is sufficient to note that, under these conditions, the promising program authorized in November 1916 was completely upset. During February 1917 a few cargoes reached Rotterdam;[25] in March only two oversea vessels arrived. A few more ships got through the U-boat blockade in April and May, and these were supplemented by an emergency loan of 20,000 tons of wheat from the Dutch Government. During these four months, however, the Commission was able by the most energetic action to import a total of only 116,000 tons against its minimum ration program of 107,000 tons each month.

In the midst of these larger issues the Commission's program was further jeopardized by German military seizures of Belgian food supplies, particularly of cattle. The only possible answer to this violation of guarantees was the suspension of import of those products which were being seized. As soon, however, as the German General Government in Brussels undertook to prevent further violation of its agreements, the program was restored.

DOCUMENT NO. 94

Letter, HOOVER TO BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE, *stating the revised program of the Commission and requesting the Government to take their share of responsibility for the necessary downward revision*

LONDON, 16 April 1917

A. Parker, Esq.
Foreign Office, London

DEAR MR. PARKER:

In discussion with Lord Robert Cecil today, I informed him of what has been evident from the Inspection and Control reports for some time, viz., the increasing abstraction of cattle from Belgium, which has now reached enormous dimensions. Lord Robert considered it essential that a telegram should be dispatched which would reach the Marquis de Villalobar, and asked me to draft up the ideas which he expressed, which I do and attach same herewith.

I take this occasion to mention the whole of the revised program of the Relief Commission, in which I consider it advisable that His Majesty's Government should take the responsibility of authorization. We will give immediate orders to Rotterdam to cease the shipments of fats and meat into Belgium and it appears to us that a simplifica-

[25] See Gay, *Statistics*, pp. 86–89.

tion of the entire matter, in view of the reduced quantities of cereals now proposed, can be accomplished by our undertaking to ship not more than 50,000 tons per month of cereals into Belgium, making no discrimination between the various articles of peas, beans, maize, wheat, rice, barley, or any other cereal which we can obtain. They all have approximately the same food value and with the reduced quantity which this involves there can be no further need of precise and elaborate shipments of each different commodity.

With regard to the North of France relief, we propose that it should amount to 17,000 tons of cereals per month and 5,500 tons of fats, meats, and condensed milk. In addition to the above articles we may be able to secure the shipment of up to 200 tons of cocoa to Belgium and 400 tons to the North of France, and in addition to this we would propose to retain the former permits to ship fish, but the supplies are very irregular and are not likely to be extensive. Our old permits provide for certain amounts of soap and sugar for the North of France, which former permits we would not exceed; but I do not propose that in present circumstances we will be able to approach the former imports. Altogether the above program represents between one-third and one-half reduction in the total quantities hitherto shipped by the Commission.

As I mentioned above, I think it would be advisable for the Government to take their share of the responsibility of the revision of this program to present necessities.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

The draft is only an idea![26]

DOCUMENT NO. 95

Letter, POLAND TO PAGE, *stating restrictions placed on C.R.B. by British Government and alleged German violations of agreement on basis of which restrictions were made*

LONDON, 14 May 1917

His Excellency the Hon. W. H. Page, London

MY DEAR MR. PAGE:

For your information I send you herewith some correspondence concerning the shipment of foodstuffs into Belgium. At the present time the following situation exists:

1. No bacon, lard, meat, or milk is allowed to be shipped by the Commission from overseas into Belgium, and this has not been done since April 18th.

2. We now have orders from the Foreign Office, as per copies attached, to stop all shipments of bacon, lard, meat, milk, butter, cheese, and similar animal products into Belgium and I am requested to telegraph these restrictive orders to our Rotterdam office.

[26] Draft telegram omitted.

Up to the present time as large an amount of these products as possible, of Dutch origin, has been forwarded into Belgium, consistent with sending the proper proportion to the North of France.

The reasons for the restriction of shipments into Belgium are based upon two conditions:

a) The violations by the Germans of their undertakings to reserve to the civil population native foods, and particularly the meat supply of the country. No doubt large quantities of meat were shipped from Belgium into Germany. You will see from the attached copy of a communication from His Excellency Señor Merry del Val that the Marquis Villalobar reports that Baron von der Lancken has given a definite undertaking that these violations will be stopped. This is the most important condition upon which were based the restrictions.

b) The consideration has been advanced that there is in Belgium sufficient meat and fats to supply the civil population without depending upon imports from the outside, and that these stocks ought to be reduced, in order that they might never be available as a source of supply to the Germans.

Whatever the theoretical position in this respect may be, the emphatic statements of desperate need of bacon and lard by the people of Belgium seems to me to make it plain that our duty is to send in to these suffering people a fair supply of bacon and lard from overseas, let us say 3,000 tons per month, and a fair proportion of what Dutch products can be obtained.

I have become convinced myself that the available stock of meat in Belgium is much less than we have supposed, and it must always be remembered that none of the agreements in regard to the original Étapes, including a population of 1,700,000 persons, protected the native food supply, the Étapes being on the same basis exactly as the territories of the North of France. For these reasons I am taking the liberty of withholding action in regard to notifying Belgium of the Foreign Office order until after you have had an opportunity of presenting the case to Lord Robert Cecil this afternoon.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 96

Letter, AMBASSADOR MERRY DEL VAL TO POLAND, *announcing satisfactory steps taken by the German Government to prevent export of Belgian cattle*

LONDON, 10 May 1917

W. B. Poland, Esq.
Director, The Commission for Relief in Belgium

SIR:

EXPORTATION OF CATTLE FROM BELGIUM

With reference to our former correspondence on this subject and in the last instance to my letter of May 2d, I have the pleasure to

inform you that according to a telegram received through Madrid from the Spanish Minister in Brussels the measures taken by the German Government to prevent fraudulent acts and abuses by part of the invading Army in violation of guarantees appear to be efficient. Baron Lancken is reported as having given proofs in this sense and is preparing an official communication which Marquis Villalobar holds to be satisfactory.

Our Minister in Brussels lays much stress upon the extreme misery entailed upon the Belgians by the want of fats and fatty foodstuffs, and urges that their importation into Belgium may once more be allowed.

I remain,

Yours faithfully

(Signed) A. MERRY DEL VAL

DOCUMENT NO. 97

Memorandum of meeting between AKERS DOUGLAS *of the Foreign Office,* HIGGINSON *of the Blockade Ministry, and* POLAND *of the C.R.B., stating decisions relative to imports by C.R.B. of Dutch products*

LONDON, 14 May 1917

After discussion it was decided:

Sugar.—For the moment no Dutch sugar is to be shipped from Holland into Belgium under the auspices of the Relief Commission. The question of action in the future is subject to further discussion. It is also suggested that it may be desirable for the Commission to purchase Dutch sugar if possible and send into Northern France, instead of importing from overseas.

Potatoes.—It was decided that no more either food or seed potatoes should be sent from Belgium into France until such time as the full quota to Great Britain has been delivered to the British authorities, thus making it possible for Holland to export potatoes into Germany. When this point has been reached, potatoes, either food or seed, may be sent in either to Belgium or France.

Meat.—It was decided, until further notice, that no beef or mutton of Dutch origin may be sent into Belgium until such time as the full British quota has been delivered to Great Britain, whereafter, as soon as meat could be sent into Germany, shipments from Dutch sources may be resumed to Belgium.

NOTE: There are no restrictions on shipments into Belgium of Dutch produce consisting of milk, butter, cheese, rabbits, poultry, eggs, and all vegetables other than potatoes.

NOTE: Shipments to France are not in discussion, as in accordance with letter from Sir Eyre Crowe dated May 7th, it was stated that supplies to Northern France were not affected.

Milk.—It was suggested that Dutch milk might be sent in wooden carriers, provided it was sweetened milk; that it was understood by the Commission that under agreement with the British Minister at The Hague, N.O.T. supplies might be sent in under C.R.B. auspices.

It was suggested by Mr. Poland that possibly glass jars might be furnished from Belgium as carriers for Dutch milk provided tin could not be obtained.

Barbed Veal.—This is not prohibited from export, not being classified as beef above and therefore may be sent in.

The records of the Commission's imports during the third year of its activity ending with October 1917 show the disastrous effect of the unrestricted U-boat campaign on the relief of Belgium and Northern France. During the twelve months only 725,000 tons reached Rotterdam,[27] which was less than the total of the first year of operations and only about 50 per cent of requirements. It is interesting to note, however, that though the import tonnage for 1917 was only about 55 per cent of that for 1916 the costs, as a result of increase in freight rates and prices, were practically the same—$115,000,000.

4. *The Fourth Year. November 1917–October 1918*

In drafting its program of imports for the fourth year the Commission followed the same method as in preceding years, when American representatives were still in the occupied territories. In the execution of the program, however, new conditions prevailed. Whereas, before 1917 it was the Allied blockade, after 1917 it was the German U-boat campaign which chiefly affected the realization of the program. During the last year of the war, therefore, the Commission's negotiations respecting its import program dealt primarily with questions of shipping and purchase. The documents relating to these matters appear in the two immediately following chapters.

DOCUMENT NO. 98

Memorandum, Poland to Belgian, French, and British Governments, *on food requirements of the Commission*

London, 20 October 1917

I. Food Requirements

A short time ago I made a trip to Holland for the purpose of holding a consultation as to the general situation of the relief, with

[27] See Gay, *Statistics,* pp. 78–98.

the chief of the Comité National, the secretary of the Comité Français, the protecting ministers in Belgium, the chairmen of the Spanish-Dutch Comité de Protection, and our own very reliable representative in Belgium. I was also, somewhat to my surprise, called upon by representatives of the German Government in Belgium who had been sent out to talk over present conditions with us, from whom a good deal of valuable information was obtained.

The whole range of the relief work was thoroughly discussed with these gentlemen, attention being given to the native resources of the country, the manner in which the German undertakings were being carried out, the possibilities of increasing the importations of Holland native products, etc., and particularly to the requirements for the coming winter.

As a result of the changed conditions in Belgium and France, the decrease in native products available and changes in the overseas food situation, it is necessary to adjust the minimum monthly ration (the new table for November 1st, 1917, is attached) and based upon it, to redetermine our required monthly imports. The statement for November 1917, is shown under 9.

1. Owing to a lesser area being planted and the considerably decreased unit production resulting from lack of fertilizers, improper cultivation, etc., the native crops in Belgium and France, as in most of Europe, are steadily decreasing. The German officers maintained that last year they were only able to fulfil their guarantee of 180 grams of native flour for France and the Belgian Étapes by importing flour from Germany. I am unable to say whether this was a sincere statement. There is no doubt that some flour furnished to Northern France did come from German mills, but the wheat may have come from France. However this may be, our investigations make it seem probable that the Germans are correct in their statements that the native crop of Flanders and Northern France this year will provide the civil population with not more than 100 grams of flour milled at 90 to 97 per capita per day. This amount, effective from September 1st, the Germans have officially undertaken to supply to the Belgian and French Étapes.

This issue of 100 grams of flour per capita per day replaces the 180 grams provided last year, upon which our previous ration sheet was based. It will now be necessary to make up the deficiency to the people of these territories by the importation of extra wheat.

We are providing in our program for Northern France this year, as last, a total per capita ration, including the native product of 280 grams of flour per day. To this would be added a small extra allowance for the people of the congested industrial districts such as Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Valenciennes, etc., and a small amount to be used as torrealine and for the making of the child biscuit ration.

In Belgium we are endeavoring to provide, as heretofore, a ration of about 250 grams per capita per day for the whole population as a basis, to which are added extra amounts for child feeding, soups for the destitute, extra rations for heavy workers, etc. The agricultural community, on about 300 grams per day, retain their own supplies. The Belgian Étape is on the same basis as Northern France.

Owing to the decrease of native bread grains in France and Belgium and the corresponding increase in exotic imports, the total amount of wheat required on this absolutely minimum basis, as appears on the attached ration sheet, is 68,000 tons per month.

2. After bread grains the next most important food item is native fats, comprised of bacon, lard, butter, tallow, margarine, cheese, etc. In France there are practically no native cattle, the milk-butter products of the few remaining animals being almost completely commandeered by the German armies. The conditions in Flanders now closely approach those in France although not quite so severe.

In Belgium, owing to the lack of fodder, animal fat products in the form of milk, butter, cheese, etc., and tallow, have greatly decreased. It is quite possible that later experience will prove that we have been using too high a figure in our estimate of native products of this kind. The local prices have gone to such figures that even were it physically possible to obtain the supplies, the local cash resources of the Comité National would be inadequate to carry out the purchases. The British Foreign Office is well informed of the strong efforts we made at their request to reduce the bacon, lard, and meat imports into Belgium and force the consumption of native stocks. The result was simply to deprive the population of these essential fats and to drive great numbers of workmen into the arms of the Germans. We have slightly increased the amount of bacon and lard to be allowed to Belgium from 4,500 to 5,000 tons per month, but this still is less than the December 1916 program of 5,670 tons. A slight reduction at the same time is made in the imports for Northern France on account of the somewhat decreased population due to deportation, etc. We are not sure that this quantity will prove adequate, but the world shortage seems so serious that with the help of the native Dutch supplies we must at least make the effort to have the people maintain themselves upon it.

3. Poor as the native crop of potatoes was last year, the prospects are that, due to lack of fertilization, proper cultivation, and decreased acreage, it will be 25 per cent poorer this year. We have, however, succeeded in getting the Germans to relieve their pernicious restrictions upon inter-regional traffic, which caused great wastage of crops last year. With careful distribution it now seems justifiable to count on 190 grams of potatoes per capita per day for Northern France and Flanders and about the same for Belgium. The Germans have guaranteed to reserve to the civil population of France and Flanders the entire native crop, which they estimate will produce 200 grams per day. The inhabitants of the regions, however, are not so optimistic.

4. In the attached ration table we show considerable amounts of food imported from Holland. This supply is uncertain. It is necessary to have permits for import from the German, the Dutch, and the British Governments. Everything that can be shipped from Holland reduces the potential German food supply, obviates a certain amount of overseas shipping, and reinforces a far too meager program; as emphasized in a footnote, if at any time the Holland importations are cut down, the overseas imports must be corre-

spondingly increased. As little restriction as possible should be put upon Dutch imports into Belgium and France.

5. Certain imports from the United Kingdom are counted upon. These cover peas, beans, and rice, which are practically impossible to obtain in the United States and are absolutely necessary items of supply for the invaded territories. The people have suffered greatly during the last six months because of the interruption of these supplies. Were we not able to obtain them in the United Kingdom we should have to import from Burma and Saigon, thereby reducing the capacity of our limited overseas tonnage.

6. Smoked herrings are an important food item. Early in the year we made arrangements to import Norwegian herrings, but at the request of the British Government, the Fisheries Department took over this for us and have arranged to supply between 15,000 and 20,000 barrels smoked herrings per month, which should produce from 1,000 to 1,500 tons net of fish.

7. Taking into account the most generous estimate of the native resources which we believe possible, it will be seen that this minimum monthly ration provides for Belgium 2,000 calories per capita per day and for France 2,141 calories per day. The slight difference is based on the fact that, aside from wheat and potatoes, there are no longer considerable native supplies to be obtained in France, while in Belgium there is still a fairly well-to-do agricultural population, which, as is always the case with agricultural classes, may be counted on to take care of its own most pressing needs before supplying others.

8. The provisions of this November 1st ration sheet represent the irreducible minimum food which must be served out to the people of France and Belgium without interruption month by month to prevent actual starvation and the breaking down of the physical and moral standards of the people. It is founded on the assumption that considerable stocks of native products will be available within the country. If, later on, the vegetable and other local supplies are reduced or the Holland imports are curtailed, or the bean and fish supplies, for instance, from the United Kingdom become unavailable, immediate steps will have to be taken to replace these foods from overseas. It must be distinctly understood that there is no elasticity whatever in this ration; it must be supplied every month without question of failure.

9. As all the reserves in Belgium, France, and Rotterdam have been wiped out, it is essential that these be built up as rapidly as possible, so that there may be some provision against shipping and other irregularities. This monthly ration must therefore be increased by 20 per cent as shown on the attached table, to represent the imports into Rotterdam.

For the months of November, December, and January, supplies have been purchased or contracted for to an extent which justified us in being confident of ability to fill completely the food requirements from overseas of this program of imports.

10. The Governments of England and France are hereby asked, in the event at any time in the future of our inability to obtain the

necessary supplies from our own organization, to guarantee monthly to the Relief, from their own resources, the full cargo required by this schedule.

I

PROGRAM OF MONTHLY IMPORTS INTO ROTTERDAM, IN METRIC TONS, TO PROVIDE MINIMUM RATION FOR BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE, WITH 20 PER CENT ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE ON PRINCIPAL ITEMS FOR BUILDING UP A RESERVE (November 1917)

(Effective November 1917)

Source	Commodity	For Belgium	For Northern France	Total	Total by sources
New York.	Wheat	64,200	17,400	81,600	
	⅓ C.R.B. Bacon, ⅔ Lard	6,000	3,360	9,360	
	Milk (condensed sweet)	600	1,440	2,040	
	Sugar (white)	.....	1,440	1,440	
	Meat	.....	1,200	1,200	
	Cocoa	300	300	600	
	Barley or rye	750	.....	750	96,990
Argentina	Maize	6,600	2,400	9,060	9,060
United Kingdom	Beans (and peas)	4,320	1,200	5,520	
	Rice	6,600	2,400	9,000	
	Fish (herrings S.&P.)	850	500	1,350	
	Coffee	500	500	1,000	
	Soap	500	800	1,300	
	Malt culms	250	.....	250	18,420
	Totals	91,470	32,940	124,470	124,470

NOTE.—Principal items above will be reduced by 17 per cent per month as soon as reserves have been built up in Belgium, France, and Rotterdam.

During the summer of 1917 the Allies were nearer defeat than at any time during the four years of conflict. On land there were disasters in nearly every theater of war, which though not decisive in a military sense reacted heavily on the morale of the war-weary people of the Entente countries. Actually the Allies were nearer defeat on the sea than on the land, though this was not widely realized by the general public. It was this struggle of the Allies to maintain their sea communications that affected particularly the work of the C.R.B.

The decreasing tonnage led the Allies to concentrate their shipping in the Atlantic. America thus became practically the sole food market, but 1917 was an extremely short crop year in America. The Commission thus had to compete for both tonnage and supplies with desperately worried officials of the Allied states who were hard pressed to provide military materials for their troops and food and other necessary supplies for the people. Everywhere there was a tightening of food control and a stringent regulation of shipping. Hoover, then United States Food Administrator and still active Chairman of the C.R.B., succeeded in getting some tonnage which neutral owners were holding in port. Poland, the Commission's European Director, after an arduous campaign, prevailed upon the newly organized Supreme War Council to grant, in December 1917, priority to the C.R.B in both food and ships for the supply of the civilian population of Belgium and Northern France.[28] On the basis of this decision the Supreme War Council authorized the Commission to lay down a minimum monthly program of 80,000 tons for Belgium and 30,000 tons for Northern France at a cost of $22,000,000 per month, of which about one-half was European expenditures chiefly for freights.

In spite of this decision it was some time before the Commission was able to make any headway in the realization of this program. This delay was due partly to the shipping situation and partly to differences between the American and British Governments over the financing of the European expenditures.[29] In January 1918 this financial matter was adjusted, but from that time on the Commission's program was subject to review by the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement.[30] In May 1918 the Commission's shipping difficulties were greatly relieved by an arrangement whereby the Allied Maritime Transport Council and the United States Shipping Board each agreed to make up 50 per cent of the C.R.B.'s tonnage shortage. From July 1918 onward this arrangement worked in a highly satisfactory fashion, and for the first time since November 1916

[28] The documents relating to the shipping crisis are given in chapter v.

[29] See chapter iv.

[30] This commission was established early in the war under British presidency to co-ordinate Allied purchases in Great Britain.

the Commission was more nearly able to realize its program of deliveries. Though the Commission was able to deliver an average of only 60,000 tons per month during the first half of the fourth year, the second six months saw an average of 100,000 tons placed in Rotterdam.[31] The total for the year ending with October 1918 was 1,091,000 tons, costing approximately $245,000,000.

Though there was a serious shortage of clothing in the occupied territories, the need of clothing was not comparable to the need of food, and hence the Commission never undertook a program of clothing deliveries on the scale of its food program. As has been noted, however, during the first year large quantities of gift clothing were distributed; and in the second year, in addition to smaller amounts of used clothing, the Commission purchased and delivered 800,000 pairs of boots. In 1917 the people were badly shod and in rags, and there was a compelling demand for blankets. After a careful analysis of requirements made early in January 1917, the Commission took steps to procure the materials for the manufacture of clothing in the workshops of the organization in the occupied territories. The list of requirements embraced every item necessary for the manufacture of men's, women's, and children's apparel, the major item being 16,000,000 yards of woolen cloth, the total cost being estimated at $10,000,000. The difficulties of relief in 1917 prevented the realization of the clothing program during this year. During 1918, however, though it was obviously impossible to meet the full program, about 50 per cent of the huge requisition was fulfilled. With the summer of 1918 the Commission made a new appeal for used clothing both in the United States and in England, with the result that some 12,000 tons were collected and distributed during the fall of 1918 and in 1919.[32]

In addition to the obvious requirements of food and clothing the Commission was from time to time required to supply innumerable items necessary for the life of a nation. For example, it was necessary to keep the flour mills running, and the Commission therefore made important importations of machine parts, belting, and filter cloth.

[31] See Gay, *Statistics*, pp. 99–121.

[32] See chapter xv and Gay, *Statistics*, pp. 30–31.

Table.—Minimum monthly rations for Belgium and Northern Fra of 111,200 tons.

PROGRAM OF MINIMUM MONTHLY RATIO

(This represents the minimum upon which the population can

Source	Commodity	Metric tonnage for month (30.5 days) Belgium	France	Total	Total sour
New York	Wheat (or substitutes)	53,500	14,500	68,000[f]	
	⅓ Bacon C.R.B. and ⅔ Lard	6,700[d]	2,800	9,500	
	Barley for yeast	1,400	...	1,400	
	Beans (and peas)	3,600	1,000	4,600[f]	
	Cocoa	300	300	600	
	Coffee	500	500	1,000	
	Maize	5,500	2,000	7,500[f]	
	Meat	1,000[j]	1,000[i]	2,000	
	Milk (condensed sweet)	800	1,300[i]	2,100	
	Rice	5,500	2,000	7,500[f]	
	Soap	1,500	1,000	2,500	
	Sugar (white)	...	1,500	1,500	108,
United Kingdom[m]	Fish	2,000	1,000[i]	3,000	3,(
Native[e]	Wheat	27,100[n]	4,600[n]	31,700	
	Eggs and poultry	2,000	250	2,250	
	Fats	4,000	100	4,100	
	Meats	2,500	100	2,600	
	Other vegetables	80,000	5,800	85,800	
	Potatoes	44,500	7,800	52,300	
	Sugar (brown)	8,000	...	8,000	186,7
	Totals	250,400	47,550	297,950	297,(

[a] All calculations are based on exact populations (including French evacué Belgium, as shown on London Form 400 of May 15, 1918), for 30½ days, and shown to the nearest 100 tons. The values of the different foods are based u *Calorie Production and C.R.B. Analyses of the Common Foods.*

[b] Considered as bread, from milling at 90.

[c] Supplementary rations in Belgium (1,510 for infants' foods, 525 for torrea 1,800 for miners, 5,000 for soups) require 8,835 tons of wheat extra. In Fran total of 4,150 tons extra is required (2,500 for infants' foods and torrealine 1,650 extra for city population). The calorific value of these tonnages (include totals above) is calculated as if made into bread for the whole population.

[d] A proportion of imported Belgian supply of bacon and lard may be repl by preserved meat, if necessary, to provide Flanders with meat.

[e] Food value of barley for yeast has been included in bread.

[f] Cereals, rice, beans, and peas may be interchanged, if necessary, owin shortage of any one.

[g] Figured as cocoa-powder, though two-thirds of the quantities have ordered as cocoa-beans.

[h] Sixty-five per cent of maize available for human consumption in forn cerealine, etc., to be used in communal soups for the destitute.

ping permitted monthly importations to Belgium and Northern France

LONDON OFFICE, August 1, 1918

R BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE

ained without immediate and serious physical deterioration)

tritive daily per capita yield in grams for Belgium (7,300,000 people)[a]					Nutritive daily per capita yield in grams for France (1,700,000 people)[a]				
ily tion	Protein	Fats	Carbo-hy-drates	Calories utilized	Daily ration	Protein	Fats	Carbo-hy-drates	Calories utilized
40[b]	19.0	4.1	114.7	538.1	240[b]	19.0	4.1	115.0	538.1
48[c]	3.8	.8	22.9	107.6	95[c]	7.5	1.6	45.5	213.0
30	.8	25.8	...	236.0	54	1.5	46.4	...	425.0
..[g]	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
16	3.6	.3	9.5	53.9	19	4.3	.4	11.3	63.6
1⅓[g]	...	...	.5	5.5	6[g]	1.3	1.3	...	25.0
..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
16[h]	1.5	.2	12.0	55.0	25[h]	2.4	.3	19.6	91.4
4½	.6	1.1	...	12.3	19	2.9	2.8	...	37.4
3⅔[k]	.3	.3	.4	5.8	25[k]	2.4	2.3	2.8	41.4
25	2.0	...	19.7	89.2	39	3.1	.1	30.8	139.2
..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
..	...	...	...	...	29	...	...	29.0	119.4
9	1.9	.6	...	13.7	19	4.1	1.3	...	29.1
46[b]	11.5	2.4	69.8	327.3	110[b]	8.7	1.9	52.7	246.6
9	1.2	1.1	...	15.1	5	.5	.6	...	7.0
18	...	18.0	...	152.0	2	...	1.8	...	18.0
11	1.6	1.6	...	21.6	2	.3	.4	...	3.9
60	6.1	1.1	22.7	120.2	112	2.0	.4	7.6	40.2
00	3.4	.2	42.0	185.0	150	2.5	.1	31.5	134.0
36	...	...	33.4	129.2	...	...	...	...	...
73	57.3	57.6	347.6	2,067.5	953	62.5	65.8	344.8	2,172.3

Corned beef. [h] Ham; the ham may be replaced by bacon.
Figured as unsweetened, since sweetened is largely unavailable.
In case it becomes possible to resume purchase of Dutch native products
d the requirements for supplementary rations of the cities of Northern
e, the imported quantities of milk, fats, meat, fish, etc., are to be correspond-
reduced.
Deficiencies in importations of fish from the United Kingdom may be made
substituting fish, meat, or other products of equal total food-value from
eas.
The farming population in Belgium, 700,000 people, are allowed 120 kilos of
wheat per head per annum, or 7,000 tons monthly, included in above total of
, which also includes expected monthly liberation in General Government
000 tons; and 5,100 tons in Étape, which milled at 90 per cent gives 80 grams
ur per head per day to the 1,825,000 people in the Étape. Four thousand six
ed tons of native wheat monthly are to be liberated in Northern France in
to provide 80 grams of flour (at 90 per cent milling) per head per day to
700,000 people there.
Based on latest estimates from provinces and districts.

5. *Importations during German Evacuation. October–November 1918*

As soon as the third and last of the great German drives of the summer of 1918 was definitely checked at the second Battle of the Marne in the middle of July, the Allies launched their decisive counter-offensive which in the course of a few months pushed the last German divisions out of Northern France and Belgium. In September the line of battle, which for four years had marked the western limit of relief, began to swing toward the east. Behind the retiring German line the inhabitants were moved back and refugees from French and Belgian Flanders flocked into the large towns in the rear with disturbing effects on the highly organized system of relief distribution.

The course of military events, which appeared to be leading to a complete change in the status of all territories where relief had been delivered, raised important questions of the policy to be adopted by the Commission in the evacuated regions. One fundamental question concerned whether the French and Belgian Governments for good and sufficient political reasons wished to take over the responsibility for the relief of the evacuated territories or desired the Commission to continue its activities with such modifications as the changing situation demanded. As appears in the following documents, the French and Belgian authorities relied on the Commission to continue its service until the two Governments were better prepared to take over this work themselves.

DOCUMENT NO. 100

Memorandum, by W. B. Poland, *regarding conduct of ravitaillement during evacuation*

Paris, 5 October 1918

The Ravitaillement of the Occupied Territories of Northern France and Belgium in the Event of Their Whole or Partial Evacuation by the Germans

The country now being taken care of by the Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France may be divided into three regions:

I. The military étape of Northern France directly under German military command—population 1,700,000; value of imported food to total consumption, about 85 per cent. The food for the northern sector—Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, Valenciennes—is brought in by lighter from Rotterdam via Ghent and Antwerp, and is distributed by water via the Lys, Escaut, and Dendre Canals, practically to points of consumption. For the southern and eastern sector the food is brought in principally by lighter from Rotterdam via the river Meuse through the towns of Liège to Namur and Charleroi, from which cities shipments are distributed by rail and finally by lorry to the communes.

II. The military étape of Flanders (Belgium) directly under German military command—population 1,800,000; value of imported food to total consumption, 75 per cent. This is the territory west of Antwerp and the Dendre Canal, and south of the East and West line through Mons, to the Sambre Canal. The supplies for this sector are brought in partly by lighter from Rotterdam, via Antwerp and the Dendre Canal, but principally by the Terneuzen Canal to Ghent. They are distributed by the Lys and by the Rulers, Ostend, and Bruges Canals. The final distribution is often done by wagons and motor trucks.

III. The territory of the General Government of Belgium. This is under the so-called civil administration of the Governor-General with headquarters at Brussels: it includes all Belgium except the small unoccupied portion, the étape of Flanders, and militarized tracts near the French frontier—population 5,500,000.

Supplies are brought in from Rotterdam by water, 8/10 via Antwerp and 2/10 via the Meuse to Liège, Namur, and Charleroi. From Antwerp they are distributed via the Dendre and the main canal system to Brussels, Louvain, Hasselt, Ath, and Mons; from these canal points the distribution is carried on first by vicinal railways where possible, and then by wagons or motor trucks: this territory is now furnished from imports 65 per cent to 70 per cent of the total food value consumed.

The approximate tonnage of food now being imported *monthly* according to the approved program to make up the minimum living ration for these three divisions is:

I. 31,000 metric tons
II. 23,500 metric tons
III. 63,000 metric tons
} (A) = 117,500 tons

In the case of the total evacuation of the occupied territories by the Germans, accompanied as it seems almost certain to be by the complete destruction or removal of all native reserves of grain, potatoes, sugar, etc., I estimate the minimum amount of food which must be imported *monthly* to keep the people from rapid physical deterioration to be as follows:

I. 35,000 metric tons II. 30,000 metric tons III. 91,000 metric tons	}	(B) = 156,000 tons

Increased imports required, 38,500 tons

Partial evacuation would reduce proportionally the necessary increases in (*B*) over (*A*).

While almost anything may happen when withdrawals take place, there seem to be three situations which are useful to consider:

First.—Where the Germans are gradually forced back (by combat) mile by mile. In this case probably all but about 25 per cent of the civil population will be evacuated into the still occupied territories, and the country will be completely devastated, all food reserves being moved back, destroyed, or shipped to Germany. Undoubtedly the armies would have to supply the food to the civil population remaining until the civil administration of France and Belgium could reorganize their own ravitaillement back of the lines. It would be wise in the opinion of the writer, for the civil administrations at once, in accord with the military authorities, to organize reserves at convenient points back of the present line. Such action has indeed already been taken by representatives of the Chambers of Commerce of Lille, St. Quentin, and Valenciennes.

Second.—Where the Germans make a strategic withdrawal to the line, Antwerp, Brussels, Mons, Avesnes, Mézières, Sedan, Verdun [?]. In this case about three-quarters of the civil population of Flanders and the industrial cities of Lille, Roubaix, Tourcoing, and Valenciennes, say, about 1,500,000, might remain to be fed by the civil administrations (or by the Commission for Relief if so desired) by food brought in from Rotterdam via the Terneuzen Canal. The Commission for Relief will try to obtain permission from the Germans to feed such populations from its protected imports even though they are sent into [German] enemy territory.

The population in the remaining territory of present occupied France southeast from St. Quentin, would have to be fed by the Allied Armies: the number here would probably not exceed 100,000 to 150,000 persons.

The remaining territory of Belgium, with a total population of some 7,000,000, including the evacués from France and Flanders, could still be fed by the C.R.B.

Third.—Where the Germans are forced to make a strategic withdrawal to the Meuse—the line, Liège, Namur, Mézières, Verdun, etc. In this case the C.R.B could feed all unoccupied Belgium and Northern France city group, say, 7,800,000 people, in the same manner as at present, but importing supplies without safe-conducts; or the respective civil administrations of France and Belgium could take over the work.

The remaining population of the liberated tract southeast of St. Quentin would have to be fed by the armies as above.

The population in the still occupied Belgian provinces of Namur

and Luxembourg, say, 650,000 persons, could probably be fed by the Commission by shipments from Holland over the German railways, as is now done in feeding the Longwy region and the Vosges.

Should the conditions work out as above outlined, the Commission for Relief will endeavor to obtain German permission to feed the civil population of the released territories in part at least by supplies from Rotterdam which have been brought in under German safe-conduct. If this is not possible, we are prepared, if it is desired, without safe-conducts, to bring our ships to Havre, to the Channel ports, or the Scheldt, and so continue the ravitaillement either by rail or water.

However the work of relief may be carried on, there must be no failure on the part of the Governments to realize that there will be a sharp increase in the amount of food required to keep these people alive just as soon as any considerable area or population is released.

On the basis of the present ration, of 2,000 calories per capita per day, this might amount to a maximum of 40,000 tons of food per month, requiring 45,000 tons D.W. of ships. It must also be borne in mind, however, that no free people except under military domination, will submit to the present inadequate daily ration, and that these poor people who have suffered untold privation for four years will immediately demand 3,000 or 3,500 calories to put them on the same basis as the rest of France and the people of England. This would mean an increase of 45 per cent over the 156,000 tons of food shown above (*B*) or a total of 226,000 tons of food, requiring D.W. ship capacity of 254,000 tons monthly.

DOCUMENT NO. 101

Letter, Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement to C.R.B., *indicating Belgian dependence on the latter during evacuation*

London, 7 October 1918

Dear Mr. Shaler:

I have spoken to Major Theunis with reference to our conversation this morning.

Major Theunis entirely agrees that the most practical method of feeding the population in the evacuated portion of Belgium would be through your organisation. He is accordingly cabling to Havre to make this proposal and to ask if he may be authorised to discuss the matter with the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

Major Theunis thinks, however, that if this proposal were to be agreed upon between the Belgian Government and your Commission a certain period might elapse between the date at which food supplies might be actually available for distribution in the districts in which they may be required and the date at which such supplies might become necessary.

I therefore propose to approach the British War Office authorities

with a view to seeing whether they could arrange for such supplies that may be necessary during the period above mentioned.

Yours very truly

(Signed) E. Wyldbore Smith

DOCUMENT NO. 102

Telegram, Poland to Hoover, *describing plans he has made and attitude he has taken regarding feeding during evacuation and after*

London, 14 October 1918

Hoover, Washington

Please advise New York. Have just returned from France after having conferences with French Belgian Governments and Red Cross regarding ravitaillement of released territories. Advised Governments that our attitude is, while willing assist in every possible way, we should relinquish all ravitaillement soon as French Belgian administrations able to handle. Governments, however, desire us continue for present wherever possible assist in feeding released regions, finally relinquishing to Governments several months hence when they are better organized. Have requested Belgian French Governments to consult and determine exact course they wish followed to meet emergency, strongly recommending at least 50,000 tons balanced ration be accumulated at Channel ports or strategical points behind lines to meet sudden demands sure to come. Has been suggested Commission deliver such emergency supplies at Channel ports, which I have agreed to provided Governments make necessary arrangements for the additional ships and food required and it is understood our responsibilities end there. Distribution being undertaken by French Belgian authorities this food would not be imported under German safe-conducts. This tentative arrangement to be temporary and Flanders and French cities to be again fed via Ghent when possible. Brown under date of 11th advises: "Von der Lancken informed Francqui on 9th that he expected Germans would leave Brussels within 15 days proposing turn over civil administration evacuated Belgium temporarily to Comité National. Also no breaches guarantees up to the present. Evacuation difficulties of Lille and West Flanders have caused some stoppage of lighters which are now being concentrated at Antwerp, Brussels, Louvain, and Mons. Shipments forward being made as necessary. On October 5th Labbé reported four weeks' stocks of bread grains in Lille, and other principal stocks largely in same proportion. Situation apparently well in hand. All possible steps being taken to meet or anticipate rapidly changing conditions." In case of partial evacuation of France and Flanders we have advised Rotterdam that every effort be made to continue to feed liberated people via Terneuzen Canal and Ghent. Endeavoring to arrange with German authorities that distribution from our supplies imported under safe-conducts be made to civil

population under neutral supervision outside as at present inside. Our Rotterdam office has been instructed to feed French or Belgian refugees arriving in Holland, estimated at perhaps one-quarter million. These are now approaching Dutch frontier. In case peaceful evacuation by Germans this movement into Holland can probably be stopped. We have authorized our representatives in Brussels and Rotterdam to make out of Relief supplies or funds in Belgium or Holland whatever expenditures may be urgently required for providing coal, clothing, shelter, food for refugees wherever they may be. If the evacuation is forced by combat we believe that the food reserves will be practically eliminated in the released territories and that few persons will remain, certainly not over 25 per cent, and that the evacués into still occupied territory or Holland, numbering several millions, will be dependent entirely upon imports. This will require increased monthly imports for them of about one-third to replace lost native ration, or if France and Flanders entirely evacuated and devastated would require 10,000 tons additional imports food per month. Situation changing rapidly and we will keep you advised of developments. Necessary to foresee that when civil population now receiving 2,000 calories is released from enemy domination they will demand same food supply as people of France and England, namely 3,000 calories, which would require an increase in food imports of 55,000 to 65,000 tons monthly. In conference with management Red Cross France stated we expected they would handle local charitable emergency requirements released territories. This seems provided for in Belgium but the position as to civil relief in France by Red Cross not entirely defined owing to overwhelming demands of military situation. I have been asked to consult with Red Cross management as to conduct of charitable work in released territories and have said C.R.B. always glad to furnish advice but without any official connection. Detailed reports by letter. Am having report from Doctor Leach of ravitaillement conditions during last year, et cetera, in released territories St. Mihiel, St. Quentin, Cambrai, and Roulers.

POLAND
Relief Commission

The Commission's supply arteries from its base at Rotterdam were the three canal lines: through Terneuzen to Ghent; direct to Antwerp; and eastward through Holland to Liège. No matter what form the German retreat took, these communications were bound to be cut at least temporarily. To meet the immediate emergency in the south and west the Commission arranged with the British War Office to concentrate 20,000,000 rations in Dunkirk. The first general line of German withdrawal ran through Antwerp, Brussels, Mons to Verdun, freeing most of Northern France and all of Western Belgium. The main supply route through Antwerp

to Brussels was cut, but the Commission immediately established communications through the Sluis-Breskens Canal to Bruges for the areas evacuated by the Germans. The Belgian territory still occupied was accessible from Rotterdam by canal to Liège and though there was great confusion in the country behind the German lines, food continued to reach the needy people from the Commission's Rotterdam base. From this source also food was furnished to the Dutch authorities to care for the Belgian refugees from the shifting zones of operation. When the German forces reached the line Liège–Namur–Revin to Verdun, the main route to Brussels through Antwerp was again open; and with the signing of the Armistice the Commission was employing all available routes, and plans for opening up the port of Dunkirk for a base for Northern France, and the port of Antwerp for Belgium, were in hand.

DOCUMENT NO. 103

Letter, British Treasury to Commission, *regarding financial responsibility for 20,000,000 rations from War Office stocks for emergency feeding during Allied advance*

Treasury Chambers, London
14 October 1918

Sir:

I am directed by the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury to transmit herewith for your information a copy of a report which They have received from the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement in regard to the immediate provision which it may be necessary to make for the relief of the civilian population in Flanders in the event of the evacuation by the enemy of any considerable portion of the territory hitherto in their occupation.

My Lords are conveying to the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement Their approval of the course proposed, involving the augmentation of War Office stocks in Flanders by 20,000,000 rations, which necessitates the supply of the various quantities stated in the report.

The distribution of these rations will be undertaken, wherever possible, by the Commission for Relief in Belgium and Their Lordships understand that, as a result of semi-official discussion with Mr. Keynes, you are prepared to recommend to the United States Treasury the continuance for the present of the existing arrangements for financing the operations of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium and the reimbursement to Their Lordships out of the

dollar balances of that Commission of the cost of the American supplies, namely, flour, preserved meats, condensed milk, lard, and sugar, up to the amounts stated.

They will be glad to receive confirmation of these arrangements in due course and to learn that the United States Treasury are prepared to continue them for such period as may be necessary on the condition to which Their Lordships attach importance that the work of relief is undertaken as far as possible by the Commission for the Relief in Belgium and that that Commission shall confine its operations, generally speaking, to the performance of the same functions as hitherto and shall concern itself with Relief rather than Reconstruction.

. . . . . .

(Signed) JOHN BRADBURY

DOCUMENT NO. 104

Telegram, HOOVER TO POLAND, *on feeding during German evacuation*

WASHINGTON, 15 October 1918

POLAND
COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, LONDON

My views strongly that we should divert no ships from Rotterdam unless situation entirely alters. If by any chance Germans should leave civilian supplies alone, population can tide over intermediate period; but if not emergency feeding must be done by armies or in any event for French population from French national stocks in France. If necessary to introduce supplies for Belgium through Channel ports British Government have ample stocks of prepared flour, etc., to cover the emergency, and supplies should be drawn from that source. American Treasury has given assurance that payment for first 20,000,000 rations approximating $5,000,000 furnished by British can be paid from American funds but only as an emergency issue and not in any way to be considered as precedent. As soon as German wave has gone back we can introduce supplies first through Terneuzen then through Antwerp from Rotterdam. Whole safety of population depends upon our maintaining Rotterdam as a base and building up stocks at that port from here and by restricting shipments into occupied Belgium during doubtful period. I do not believe Germans will violate safe-conduct even if supplies sent inside Allied lines after evacuation, but if they do we can have all ships diverted south and convoyed to Rotterdam. Port milling and rail capacity from Channel ports inland is hopeless except for emergency supplies from England as above. As to refugees suggest you get Pershing furlough 10 or 12 best C.R.B. men to assist Brown in Holland at once and we of course authorize any necessary expenditure food or money. We will release Simpson for immediate duty. As to con-

tinuing relief, it seems to us that we stop automatically in Northern France at evacuation, but as to Belgium we can work it out as a situation develops. My own idea is as quickly as civil government restored in a month or so to begin handing empty boats at New York to Belgian Government for their disposal thus gradually decreasing shipments for C.R.B. account to nothing. Hope you will make no undertakings without my approval.

HOOVER

6. *Rehabilitation. November 1918–August 1919*

Since May 1917 no Americans had been in Belgium, but after the Armistice, at the Commission's request, many of its former members were released from the army for relief service. During the German occupation an important duty of the American and later of the Spanish and Dutch delegates had been to see to it that all German guarantees were observed. This function had of course disappeared with the German retirement and the American delegates were engaged merely in assisting in the distribution of relief. In Belgium the Comité National quickly recovered from the effects of the retreat so that the Commission's activities were confined largely to routine matters of supply handled in its reconstituted Brussels office. The liberated territory in Northern France presented a different case. Four years of military operations had worked havoc and desolation in town and village. Conditions were aggravated by the return of thousands of anxious refugees, who after their long absence now insisted on camping out by the piles of rocks and rubbish where their homes had once stood. They brought nothing with them and found nothing, and refused to leave though the winter months were approaching. In this region of devastation the Commission found work to do and quickly set up an organization in the field. Here the relief not only consisted of providing food and clothing but included the building of temporary shelters and the supplying of household goods of all sorts. A unit of the American Navy detailed to assist the Commission rendered great service and great quantities of surplus American military stores turned over to the Commission at minimum cost were utilized in this work.

DOCUMENT NO. 105

Letter, FRENCH EMBASSY, LONDON, TO POLAND, *stating that French Government would be glad to have the Commission continue its task in liberated regions*

LONDON, 25 October 1918

DEAR MR. POLAND:

I am authorized by Monsieur Pichon to declare to you that the Government of the Republic agrees to reserve solely to the civil populations of the liberated territories, the provisions imported by the Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France for those populations; these provisions will be distributed by the committees of the C.R.B.

The French Government will be glad to have the Commission for Relief continue its task in the French liberated territories until such time as normal life may be renewed in those regions.

It is of course understood that the French Government will complete the rations imported by the C.R.B.

Please accept, dear Mr. Poland, the expression of my most devoted sentiments.

(Signed) A. DE FLEURIAU

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 106

Telegram, HOOVER TO POLAND, *on German safe-conducts and increase of program of importations*

WASHINGTON, 29 October 1918

FOR POLAND, LONDON

In view of the fact that so large a proportion of our tonnage is non-war zone tonnage, I have come to your view of pressing Germans for continued safe-conducts. We are making every arrangement increasing food and clothing shipments program at once. Will be glad have Committee's report conditions Flanders early date.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 107

Letter, POLAND TO FRENCH EMBASSY, LONDON, *outlining steps taken to care for liberated French territories*

LONDON, 2 November 1918

Monsieur A. de Fleuriau, London

DEAR M. DE FLEURIAU:

I acknowledge with much appreciation your letter of October 25th, advising me that you are authorized by M. Pichon to state to us that the French Government will be glad to have the Commission

for Relief continue its task in the French liberated territories until such time as normal life may be renewed in those regions.

The Commission place their services at the disposal of the French Government so far as they may be desired.

Following the indications of your letter, I have with the approval of our Chairman, arranged for the immediate dispatch of 14,000 tons of balanced rations to Dunkirk. This is sufficient to supply 600,000 persons for one month with a ration of 2,567 calories per capita per day. Such shipments probably will not be available for distribution inside of one month.

I hope to arrive in Paris about November 13th and at that time to meet representatives of the French Government, to determine such adjustments as may be necessary to meet the wishes of the French Government, in view of the new conditions arising through the release of the occupied territories.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 108

Letter, POLAND TO BELGIAN GOVERNMENT, *outlining proposed method of caring for liberated Belgian territory*

LONDON, 4 November 1918

His Excellency Monsieur Cooreman,
Ministre de Reconstitution Nationale, Havre

MY DEAR MONSIEUR COOREMAN:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of a letter from you, undated, handed to me by Mr. Gregoir on 1st November, the questions in which I will endeavor to answer in their order.

First period.—I have been officially advised by the Deputy Director of Supplies of the British War Office, that the 20,000,000 rations requested of the British military authorities have been arranged for and are either being taken over by the Belgian Intendance at Calais, or are in order there to be turned over. I gather from the report of the Belgian Minister of War, delivered to me through the Chevalier Carton de Wiart, that the British military authorities, together with the Belgian Intendance, are carrying out this preliminary ravitaillement. I have no advice from the French military authorities as to action in Belgium, and infer that it is understood the food will be supplied entirely by the British, except in cases of immediate emergency back of their line.

Second period.—It is my understanding that the Belgian Government has 19,000,000 rations in Paris and 1,000,000 in Calais, and that an effort will be made to get these forward at once to carry on the feeding in the released territories subsequent to the expenditure of the 20,000,000 British rations. I am sure you will recognize the

imperative necessity of expediting in every possible way the forwarding of these supplies to the distributing points in the Belgian territory. It has occurred to me that as the greatest difficulty in moving these supplies will be from lack of equipment, your very able Minister of Transportation might think it wise to offer to the French Government for this purpose Belgian locomotives and trucks which are, I believe, in part stored in the vicinity of Havre. The Commission will supplement these supplies by bringing in through all channels available whatever stocks we have in Rotterdam which have not arrived under German safe-conducts, or which we may succeed in importing from Great Britain. These stocks at present amount to about 6,000 or 7,000 tons and are being slowly increased. I also hope to be able to obtain in a reasonably short time additional Dutch supplies, in the first instance largely fresh fish and some vegetables.

Third period.—Supplementing this I have ordered from the United States 35,000 tons of balanced ration, to be forwarded under convoy directly from the United States to Flushing. Such supplies may begin to arrive by the 25th of November, but should not be counted on before December 1st. These supplies may be diverted to any port on arrival at a British Channel port and could therefore be sent to Dunkirk if that seems desirable at the time.

I have received notice that United States Treasury funds may be used equally for the purpose of supplies for the evacuated territories as well as for the occupied territories.

No doubt it will be for the best interests of the ravitaillement of the released territories that all these operations be combined, one supplementing the other. I shall hope to have the pleasure of meeting yourself and Director Brown on Thursday the 7th November, to arrange all the details to your satisfaction.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 109

Telegram, HOOVER TO POLAND, *stating policy of Commission as to continuance of operations*

WASHINGTON, 3 November 1918

FOR POLAND, LONDON

Any arrangements made must be absolutely for day-to-day purposes. The whole question of continued relief through C.R.B. or otherwise must be negotiated by our Government between governments involved themselves.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 110

Letter and memorandum, HOOVER TO PRESIDENT WILSON, *on further assistance to Belgium and Northern France*

WASHINGTON, 21 October 1918

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The task of the Belgian Relief Commission—the preservation of the life of 10,000,000 occupied Belgians and French over these four years—is now rapidly drawing to conclusion, and questions as to what further assistance should be extended to these people and as to what organization should be set up are pressing, as the governments in Europe are taking steps on the matter.

I enclose herewith a short memorandum on—

a) The relief during occupation.

b) The relief required for rehabilitation.

The released French population can be best cared for by their own Government through France, and I do not therefore consider that we need concern ourselves therewith.

The Belgian people, while more fortunate than the Serbians and Poles in that they are all alive, come out of occupation undernourished, underhoused, underclothed, industrial plants ruined, without raw material, and without resources in shipping and money to find a remedy.

There is immediate need for 550,000 tons of shipping, of which 350,000 are now in use by the Relief Commission. The Allied Governmental aid needs to be at once increased from about $15,000,000 per month at present being given (of which our Government furnishes $9,000,000) to about $30,000,000 per month. With these resources over twelve to eighteen months I believe the people could be made self-supporting.

Assuming this must be accomplished, the problem of organization at once arises. Certain Belgians are anxious that the Relief Commission should liquidate and be handed over to the restored Belgian Government, who should undertake all further relief with loans from the Allied Governments; others wish the Commission to continue to perform such functions as may be assigned by the Belgian Government; others are anxious that the Commission should undertake the great problem of economic restoration, acting as hitherto, in cooperation with Belgian unofficial organizations and drawing its support from our own and Allied Governments and public charity. The British Government is opening discussion with our Government on the question.

From a purely Belgian point of view the direct operation by their Government is a mixed argument of sturdy independence and of natural *amour propre* and, to some extent, of individual political ambitions; the second proposition of a continuance controlled by the Belgian Government is an argument of utilization of the organization until it can be dispensed with at will; the third is an argument which I believe should be further discussed, as it has both moral and economic bearings for the American people. I need hardly mention that the selfish view of myself and my colleagues would be entirely

with the first proposition. We would like to have relief from this especially poignant anxiety that has now extended over four years.

With the present misery and economic difficulties facing Europe there can be little hope of Belgian recuperation without the major help coming from the United States. The American people, under your guidance, through its citizens and with the help of its officials, took the lead in internal protection and sustenance of this population four years ago. This imposes no obligation, but offers an opportunity for further service—the completion of which would confer moral values to our country not to be underestimated.

Intangible as these values are, they cannot be gained by our people unless they are won through some bond of definite American organization participating in the labor and its consummation.

While it can be said that the Belgians are an efficient administrative people, it is my impression that security and effectiveness in the application of these funds, without religious, political, or racial bias, could be much more effectively secured by American participation in organization and administration.

There will be a large outpouring of charity towards the Belgian people, which could be stimulated, but in the expenditure of which, unless there is some single channel, there will be enormous waste and corruption, and reactions will set in to the disadvantage of both Belgian and American people.

If the matter were undertaken by the Belgian Government alone, they would naturally have to take their position with the other needy Allied Governments under the various Allied controls; whereas, if a distinctly American organization, maintained by the American Government, were to be installed for this service, such an organization could easily secure the same tenderness in obtaining priorities and supplies, and complete independence of action from other Allied control that it now possesses.

As these controls are dominated by the other needy governments I feel that the Belgians will get off much worse in shipping and in supplies than if they are particularly under our wing. If American participation in organization of rehabilitation is to be maintained it would seem logical to continue it through the Relief Commission whose organization is in action and simply requires larger resources, and the use of these media would avoid discussion of any new instrumentality with the Allied Governments. It would represent the rounding out of an enterprise of our people toward another in which we could have lasting pride.

One of the objectives in peace conferences must be the repayment, in addition to other damages, to Belgium of the whole of the sums that have been spent by the Relief Commission, together with such further moneys as are spent on rehabilitation. It would appear to me that it would be a pointed and positive lesson to the world for all future time if it could be made a peace condition that the expenditures of the Relief Commission both in the past and in the future are made repayable by the Germans, directly to the Relief Commission, and that this Commission should refund the sums advanced by the various governments.

I should be glad to have your views in the matter, and if you consider the Commission should be continued to this new purpose and that it will have the support of the Government, it is desirable that its relations to Belgian and other governments should be properly defined.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

THE RELIEF OF BELGIUM

STAGE I. THE RELIEF DURING OCCUPATION

The 7,500,000 Belgians and 2,500,000 French, overrun by the Germans, were, prior to the war, dependent upon imports for about 70 per cent of their food. The Germans refused assistance, seized even the existing stocks of food, and, by paralyzing all industry, rendered 4,000,000 of the people destitute. The preservation of the population depended upon the intervention of instrumentality independent of the then-belligerents, who could open and maintain a door through blockade and occupying armies; could protect the population from further despoliation of food; could summon large finance; could find transport, organization, and charity.

The "Commission for Relief in Belgium" was founded by Americans under your approval and under American direction almost exactly four years ago and has been continuously protected by the United States Government and its Ambassadors abroad throughout this period. During the whole time the Commission has operated in a sort of semi-governmental capacity making its own agreements with various governments, including the enemy. After its success and necessity were demonstrated through charity, it was able to secure unique financial support from the English, French, and Belgian Governments and from the American Government after our entrance into the war. It has also had the strong diplomatic support of the Dutch and Spanish Governments, who, upon our entry into the war, undertook the protection of the Belgian and French distribution committees. In this latter period the whole of our organization, both inside and outside of Belgium, has continued as before, without American personnel in occupied territory, but, I regret to say, without the same observance of agreements by the Germans.

The Commission has built up a large organization in purchase of foodstuffs; the solicitation of charity; the operation of seventy trans-Atlantic steamers, 500 canal boats and tugs, 200 central warehouses; a complete rationing system, public feeding and clothing for the destitute; the provision of housing, of loans, and even currency; the local agriculture has been stimulated and protected; the principal native foodstuffs have been requisitioned and administered; all with an intricate system of accounts with checks and balances that have freed it from any suspicion of misconduct.

The direction exterior to Belgium has been entirely by American volunteers, some two hundred in number, and in Belgium the administration has been built up through the creation of a multitude of joint committees of Belgians, French, and Americans, the total per-

sonnel amounting to over 100,000 people, themselves nearly all volunteers.

The Commission has received the following approximate sums, the governmental subsidies being acknowledged by the Belgian Government at Havre as obligations upon them in respect to Belgium, the French Government taking the same obligation in respect to its relieved population:

From public charity	$ 32,000,000
From British Government	120,000,000
From French Government	220,000,000
From American Government	200,000,000
Total	$572,000,000

The total expenditure on "overhead" has been less than three-eighths of one per cent. There have been, in the four years, delivered or en route to Belgium and Northern France, the following supplies:

Breadstuffs	119,100,000	bushels
Pork products	543,900,000	pounds
Meat	73,000,000	pounds
Rice	715,900,000	pounds
Beans and peas	283,500,000	pounds
Dairy products	113,300,000	pounds
Preserved fish	63,200,000	pounds
Cocoa and coffee	93,200,000	pounds
Sugar	98,100,000	pounds
Soap	51,000,000	pounds
Vegetables	350,000,000	pounds
Sundries	65,000,000	pounds
Clothing	21,000,000	garments

In addition to the foregoing, some $350,000,000 of native produce has been financed internally in Belgium and Northern France by the Relief Organization. The population has been upon a drastic régime. We have done all that finance, shipping, and administration could accomplish. There has been no starvation; there has been undernourishment. Much food has been lost by submarines, and some native food taken by the Germans despite agreements and a stream of protests to the contrary.

It may not be amiss to mention that the population, suddenly and utterly crushed by the horrors of invasion, betrayed of their independence, treated with terrible harshness by the German Army, faced with starvation, had lost all courage, morale, and hope. Through the assurance of physical supplies, but more through the summons to organize to their own salvation, they regained courage, their national spirit revived, and they have maintained a vivid and damaging opposition to the Germans throughout these long four years. This healing of a nation's soul has been accomplished by the devotion of the Belgian and French men and women who have made and carried on for four years the relief in a spirit of care and tenderness to their countrymen and have made the whole effort a possibility. The ter-

rible cruelty of the Germans has been almost unbearable to even witness by our immune staff; it would have been greater but for the resolute courage and obstruction of the population.

With the rapid redemption of Belgium and Northern France the primary task of the Commission is nearing completion. The people have been preserved. The population is undiminished in numbers.

The proof of necessity of the Commission lies in the parallel loss of 25 per cent to 50 per cent of the populations of Serbia and Poland, countries of larger proportionate agricultural resources but of no relief.

The Commission could soon with propriety and dignity liquidate its organization.

STAGE II. ASSISTANCE TOWARD REHABILITATION

We must now consider the plight of these people and their necessities over the next two years if they are to be restored to a self-supporting basis. The French population represents but 7 per cent of the entire country and can well be absorbed into their own national problems. The Belgians are without help but from foreigners. They must have continued large assistance.

1. Immediately upon evacuation the population will require enlarged food imports, as the industrial class is too weak to return and continue in hard physical labor upon the present basis of feeding. The cattle had already been reduced from 1,800,000 to 600,000 before the retreat began and a greater destruction has probably now taken place. The child life of the nation will depend upon much enlarged shipments of special food and upon help to purchase milk cattle from Holland. The work animals are largely gone and more must be recruited from Holland and elsewhere if agriculture is to be continued.

2. The house destruction amounts to some 50,000 homes, and aid will need to be extended in gradual rehabilitation.

3. The country must at once have large textile imports. The original stocks were pillaged by the Germans. There has been no production, and except for meager relief supplies they have had no imports in four years.

4. There has been the most heart-breaking destruction of factories by the Germans in an effort to destroy all Belgian industry or delay its recuperation. Large numbers of shop tools, spinning devices, et cetera, must be imported at once, and aid must be given to manufacturers to enable them to get upon their feet.

5. For some partially surviving factories they must at once have raw materials, not only for their own supply but to contribute their labor to Allied ends. This more particularly applies to cotton, wool, leather, copper, iron, et cetera.

6. The railway destruction has been large, and but little hope can be entertained that this primary necessity to existence can be re-established without immediate help in rails and rolling stock. No doubt much will be done by the military authorities in this direction in re-establishment of communications, but help will need to be given for provision of transport for the civilian population.

Altogether, if these people are to be saved and a start made at rehabilitation they must have:

a) Overseas—chiefly American—imports of at least 250,000 tons per month, involving the use of 550,000 tons of shipping.

b) Subsidies of at least $30,000,000 per month from the United States and Allied Governments with which to pay for and transport materials. They must have large charitable support in aid of the destitute—the 4,000,000 people now on the soup lines cannot find employment over months. This charity must be organized through a single channel, otherwise well-meaning efforts will create waste, corruption, and chaos.

c) Energetic organization in procurement of resources and supplies for the purposes enumerated above and for their transport and proper distribution. The internal distribution set up by the Relief organization is based upon the principle of the sale of goods brought into Belgium to all those who could pay, using the receipts from these local sales to employ or to support the destitute. This principle could be maintained in any continuation of relief, for its vigorous enforcement tends not only to minimize pauperism but gives the foundation for internal economic life.

DOCUMENT NO. 111

Letter, PRESIDENT WILSON TO HOOVER, *authorizing continuation and enlargement of Commission*

THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON
7 November 1918

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

The probable early evacuation of Belgium brings us face to face with the problem of this distressed people, not only in regard to continued food relief, but also with regard to the many questions of economic rehabilitation. The initial task of preserving the bare lives of the people during German occupation, undertaken four years ago under your direction, is now nearing completion. I believe that the American people will willingly accept a large share of the burden of assisting in the now all-important work of reconstruction and rehabilitation, pending repayment by Germany for the injury done.

In order that such assistance should be exerted in the most liberal, efficient, and comprehensive manner, I feel that it should be organized under a single agency, which may co-ordinate the whole effort of the American people and Government, in the furnishing of supplies, machinery, finance, exchange, shipping, trade relations, and philanthropic aid. I also feel that such an agency, in addition to being the sole vehicle of supplies, should also have some proper participation in the expenditure and distribution of assistance. Such unity of administration would give much greater assurance of proper assistance and should be effective in preventing profiteering.

The large experience of the Belgian Relief Commission, the character of its organization without profit, its established use of shipping, and the sympathetic bond which it now forms with the Belgian people point to its continuation and enlargement as the natural

agency for this purpose. I should therefore be glad if you and your colleagues of the Commission would undertake this extended work.

I understand that it is also the wish and purpose of the English and French people to participate in carrying this burden. It would seem to me desirable to inquire if these Governments would not therefore continue and enlarge their present support to the Commission to these ends, so that we may have a comprehensive and efficient agency for dealing with the entire problem on behalf of all.

It is of course of primary importance that our assistance in this expenditure and organization shall be built upon co-operation with the Belgian Government and the use of such internal agencies and methods as may be agreed upon with them, to whom our whole solicitude is directed.

It is also of first importance that the expenditure of all the philanthropic aid of the American people toward Belgium, of whatever character, should be conducted by or under the control of the Commission, if duplication and waste are to be avoided.

With a view to the advancement of these ideas, I have addressed a note to the various departments of our Government, indicating my wish that all matters relating to these problems should be undertaken under your guidance and that they should give to you every co-operation.

I wish you to proceed at once with the undertaking so far as it relates to the United States, and I should be glad if you would, through the proper agencies, take up a discussion of these matters with the Belgian Government and with the English and French Governments as to their relationship and participation.

Cordially and sincerely yours

(Signed) Woodrow Wilson

Some weeks before hostilities actually ceased Hoover formulated tentative plans for the provision of foodstuffs for those parts of Europe where the exhaustion of supplies and political disturbances threw the shadow of famine over millions of people. He first contemplated an expansion of the Commission to administer this general European relief, but later modified this plan by organizing the American Relief Administration to handle the general relief and preserved the identity and functions of the Commission for the service in Belgium and Northern France.

Under this general European relief plan Hoover's preparation had been such that with the signing of the Armistice, fleets of laden food ships sailed from American ports. Europe was in chaos; the blockade was still on; no specific unloading ports could be named; and thus these relief vessels were despatched with directions to call at Falmouth or at Gibral-

tar for orders. On the 17th November Hoover himself sailed for Europe and a few weeks later was appointed Director General of Relief for the United States and the Allies.

Though all of Europe was appealing for food, Hoover first saw that the people of Belgium and Northern France were fully supplied. The seven months November 1918 to May 1919 saw 1,074,948 tons of relief supplies valued at $261,000,000 poured into these formerly occupied areas.[33] As elsewhere in Europe, the Great War left in Belgium its record in the number of waifs and undernourished children; and it was the Commission's endeavor to establish on a permanent basis the work of child welfare which had been its particular care during the occupation.[34]

By May 1919 the Governments of Belgium and France had sufficiently recovered to begin to take over the responsibility of provisioning their people, and accordingly the Commission gradually withdrew. By August 1919 the last shipment had been made and all American personnel in the field released.

DOCUMENT NO. 112

Letter, Hoover to President Wilson, *outlining proposed plan of extension of relief organization*

Washington, 12 November 1918

Dear Mr. President:

Please find enclosed herewith a memorandum agreed this morning between Mr. Baker, Mr. Hurley, and myself.

I should be glad to know if it meets with your approval.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) Herbert Hoover

Memorandum of Arrangements With Regard to Provisioning the Populations Which Are Now or Have Been Under the Domination of the Central Empires

1. Mr. Hoover, as United States Food Administrator, will proceed at once to Europe to determine what action is required from the United States and what extensions of the Food Administration organization or otherwise are necessary in order to carry out the work of the participation of the United States Government in this matter, and to take such steps as are necessary in temporary relief.

[33] See Gay, *Statistics,* pp. 124–125.

[34] See chapter xvi and chapter xiii.

2. In order to expedite the movement of foodstuffs towards Europe, the War Department will undertake to purchase in the usual co-ordination through the Food Administration during the next twenty days, 120,000 tons of flour and from 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 pounds of pork products. These foodstuffs to be shipped by the diversion of Army tonnage at the earliest possible moment that the Shipping Board arranges and to be consigned to French ports for reconsignment or storage.

3. This foodstuff and any other suitable surplus supplies of the Quartermaster in Europe to be made available for distribution at Mr. Hoover's direction, it being understood that if it proves infeasible to reship or redirect the steamers to the territories lately held by the Central Empires, Mr. Hoover will make arrangements for the resale of the foodstuffs to the Allied Governments or, alternatively, to the Belgian Relief.

4. In order to facilitate administration in Washington, Mr. Hoover will set up a preliminary committee to assist the Food Administration, comprising—

Mr. Theodore Whitmarsh, of the Food Administration, who will act as chairman in Mr. Hoover's absence.

Mr. F. S. Snyder, of the Meat Division of the Food Administration.

Mr. Julius H. Barnes, of the Cereal Division of the Food Administration.

General R. E. Wood, Quartermaster General, representing the War Department.

Mr. John Beaver White, representing the War Trade Board.

Mr. Prentiss N. Gray, representing the Shipping Board.

These gentlemen to take in hand the general directions of these operations through the various Government agencies concerned.

5. The War Department is to purchase, inspect, pay for, load, and ship these foodstuffs in the usual manner of transmission of Quartermaster's supplies, and upon transfer from the Quartermaster's Department in Europe they are to be paid for by the buyer.

6. The American representatives in Europe are to be at once instructed by cable that the whole of the matter of the American food supplies and the establishment of a more permanent organization are to be settled by Mr. Hoover on his arrival in Europe, and that the United States will take no participation in any arrangements made pending that time.

Approved: Woodrow Wilson

DOCUMENT NO. 113

Telegram, Poland to Washington Office, *stating enlarged program for winter months*

London, 27 November 1918

For Belgian Relief, Washington

Poland in conference Paris with Hoover Taylor Cotton instructs us cable you as follows effective immediately: Continue to ship monthly metric tons

To Dunkirk for Northern France:

	Metric tons
Rice	4,600
Peas and beans	4,600
Maize flour	3,100
Bacon and lard	4,000
Meat and ham	1,500
Milk	1,500
Sugar	1,500
Coffee	1,200
Cocoa	360
Soap	1,200
	23,560

To Rotterdam for Belgium:

Wheat	87,000
Barley	2,000
Bacon and lard	15,000
Meat and ham	3,000
Rice	7,000
Beans and peas	5,000
Maize	30,000
Milk	3,000
Soap	2,000
Cocoa	300
Coffee	1,000
Vegetable oil	500
Linseed	1,000
	156,800

Grand total .....180,360 metric tons monthly

GAY, RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 114

Telegram, HOOVER TO FOOD ADMINISTRATION, *stating necessity of continuing relief in Northern France into the new year*

PARIS, 28 December 1918

RICKARD, FOOD ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON

You can issue the following to the press: The C.R.B. had hoped to surrender the Relief of North France to the French Government immediately upon German retreat. It has been found, however, impossible for the French Government to undertake the food supply of this area for some months to come, and upon the urgent request of the Government the C.R.B. has decided to continue.

After four years paralysis of wholesale and retail business; with the destruction of the principal towns and shops, these trades have disappeared and the people are today dependent upon a ration issued directly to them just as before the German evacuation.

Until transport and trade can be rehabilitated, the present system must go on for the French distribution is done by the trades. These arrangements necessitate some reorganization of the Relief and its entire separation from Belgium.

Twenty of the members of the C.R.B. who joined the American Army as officers have been released by General Pershing to undertake this work.

Transportation connection is maintained with the region through Dunkirk and through one Belgian canal still operating, supplemented by motor trucks originally installed by the armies and now being gradually taken over by the C.R.B.

The population in this area at the moment of the retreat was about one and a half millions, there also being about 300,000 refugees in Belgium who are returning, and some 500,000 refugees in France, all of whom are anxious to return to their native soil.

The destruction of some twenty principal towns and literally hundreds of villages renders the return of these refugees a stupendous problem. Every effort is being made to restrain them from going back until some systematic prior provision of shelter can be made. They, however, evade all official urging and the roads are a continuous procession of these pitiable bodies. Thousands of them reach their villages to find every vestige of shelter destroyed and finally wander into the villages farther back from the acute battle area, which are already overcrowded to a heart-breaking degree.

In order to remedy this situation to some extent, the Relief Commission has secured 150 volunteers from the American Navy and is taking over a large amount of secondhand barrack material from the Navy and the Army, and these barracks are in course of erection adjacent to the destroyed villages under the superintendence of naval volunteers.

A large amount of boots and shoes and warm clothing have been taken over from the Quartermaster's supplies, and are being distributed to the people. The French Government is endeavoring to obtain some cattle from Switzerland and horses from the various armies, which, together with the meager supply of agricultural implements, may enable the population to get in some portion of next year's crop in those areas that are not too badly destroyed by battle.

The entire industrial life of the region has been destroyed by the Germans. There is scarcely a single factory that can be operated without a very large portion of new equipment. The coal mines are totally destroyed, and the network of railways in this region rendered almost hopeless of reconstruction for many months. The German method of destruction was to bend every single rail by exploding a hand-grenade under it, rendering it useless for all time. The Grand Canal du Nord, which connects this section of France with the Belgian canal system and is the natural entreport for goods from Antwerp or Rotterdam, was itself practically the fighting line for months and is so badly destroyed that it will take fully a year for its complete reconstruction.

The relief is based upon the allowance of food to the value of about 35 cents per day to the destitute, those having any resources or

employment being required to pay. The problem of destitution is not yet known but appears to be fully 60 per cent of the people.

The French Government is supplying some food from France to the Relief Commission and the imports required from the United States amount to about 30,000,000 pounds per month.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 115

Letter, HOOVER TO VILGRAIN, *advising the termination of shipments into Northern France*

PARIS, 8 April 1919

MR. VILGRAIN, *Sous Secretaire d'Etat du Ravitaillement, Ministère du Ravitaillement, Paris*

MY DEAR VILGRAIN:

The relief of Northern France is now coming to its logical conclusion. Your Ministry has now so energetically spread its own organization over the invaded regions that the necessity for the foodstuffs imported through the C.R.B. is steadily diminishing. We have taken stock of the various food supplies and clothing in the hands of the local relief committees and find that with the transfer of certain stocks which we have in reserve at Antwerp, the people will require no further C.R.B. overseas shipments in order to complete the provisioning until the 1st of July. Therefore, I have instructed the C.R.B. to hand over stocks in Antwerp to the French committee and, so far as ravitaillement is concerned, to cease all connection therewith on the 1st of May.

In order that the directors of the C.R.B. may give evidence to the French people of their devotion, Mr. Poland and my other colleagues have decided that we will carry on in the occupied regions the child clinics and the special feeding of the 30,000 debilitated children until such time as they are in normal condition. This is, of course, undertaken from funds provided by the directors of the C.R.B. and does not involve French Government intervention.

We are also arranging for the completion of the distribution of some thousands of tons of gift clothing which we have imported in the north of France. The 300 barracks which have been initiated by the C.R.B. and carried on behalf of the Ministry of the Liberated Regions, with the assistance of the American Navy, will be completed early in May, so that after that date our sole connection with the North will be the care of the 30,000 debilitated children.

I wish to express again on my own and on behalf of Mr. Poland and all my colleagues the sentiments of respect which we have derived from the four years of co-operation with the French Government and the admiration for the ability, courage, and fortitude of the two millions of French people of the occupied population whose food supply was entrusted to our administration now over four and one-half years ago.

Faithfully yours
(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 116

Letter, HOOVER TO FRANCQUI, *outlining the method by which the vessels in Relief service would be turned over to agents of the Belgian Government and shipments by the Commission would cease.*

PARIS, 26 March 1919

M. Emile Francqui, President
Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, Brussels

MY DEAR FRANCQUI:

Apropos of the discussions we have had, I think we are in agreement that the time has arrived when we should undertake a further step in the demobilization of the C.R.B. and the Comité National. This becomes also of importance in that it would seem to me desirable from the point of view of transportation of Belgian imports that the C.R.B. fleet should be placed in control of the Belgian authorities or Belgian merchants in such a manner as to allow its mobility in handling other imported goods and exports, both of which are now practically impossible through the C.R.B. alone.

In order to carry this out, I understand that it is agreed that the Belgian Government will take over the outstanding charters of all steamers which arrive in New York after April 30th, or, alternatively, will make their own agency arrangements for so doing, and that at the same time the Belgian Government will make such agency arrangements in the United States, in conjunction with the Belgian High Commissioner there, as may be necessary for the loading on these steamers of such foodstuffs as the Belgian Government may wish to purchase. Thus, the C.R.B. will withdraw from all food purchase and shipping with regard to steamers which may arrive after the thirtieth day of April.

It is desirable, I think, from the point of view of the American Treasury and the Belgian Government, that the C.R.B. should remain active for a certain further period which we may determine from time to time, in assistance to the Belgian Government in Treasury and other arrangements in the United States, as in fact, at the present moment the C.R.B. has an official relation with the American Treasury which very materially facilitates Belgian operations. This relationship would not entail the direct handling of funds by the C.R.B. after the above date, except for the liquidation of outstanding accounts, but will probably entail the certification by the C.R.B. of the sums of money involved in advances to the Belgian Government for the purchase of food.

There is one particular in this connection that I wish made emphatic: In any arrangements that the Belgian Government may set up to carry on this work, there must be no feeling on their part that they are under any obligation whatever to do business with men formerly associated with the C.R.B. Some of these men may be useful from their previous experience with Belgium, but I do not for one moment countenance any man trading on his association to obtain business ends.

Faithfully yours
(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

7. *Summary of Commission's Importations. 1914–1919*

ANNUAL IMPORTS AND COSTS[35]

November 1914–August 1919

	Metric tons	Cost
First Year.....	983,808	$ 68,924,221.33
Second Year....	1,300,322	116,055,602.14
Third Year.....	724,175	115,297,779.88
Fourth Year....	1,091,178	244,781,218.88
Fifth Year.....	1,074,948	261,150,491.22
	5,174,431	$806,209,313.45
Warehousing, Insurance of Stocks, etc.....		1,481,627.68
		$807,690,941.13

SUMMARY OF COMMODITIES IMPORTED[36]

November 1914–August 1919

Commodity	Metric tons
Bread grains and flour.....	3,351,295
Maize, rice, beans and peas.....	995,620
Bacon, lard and meat.....	415,766
Milk	81,677
Sugar	51,244
Soap	39,140
Sundry foods	175,615
Clothing	23,769
Miscellaneous	40,305
Total	5,174,431

[35] Detailed statistical analyses of C.R.B. imports are given in Gay, *Statistics.*

[36] These importations plus local products controlled by the relief organization constituted the ration of the occupied territories. For documents on local products see chapter viii.

Chapter IV

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES

The consent of the belligerent governments and the pertinent diplomatic guarantees, the establishment of relief organizations inside and outside the occupied territories, the determination of imports required—all constituted essential preliminaries to the relief of Belgium and Northern France. But they produced no food. Food costs money to buy and transport, and as some nine million people had to be fed, a great deal of money had to be found. Each succeeding year more money was required as the need of imports grew and the cost of commodities and transport mounted to more and more forbidding levels.

The original undertaking was conceived as a charitable operation based on donations in kind and money throughout the world plus such slender resources as could be gathered through the balances of Belgian banks abroad. Within a very short time, however, Hoover recognized that the task was greater than such a precarious income would support.[1] He began, therefore, to press for government support from both the German and the Entente Governments, basing his demands upon their responsibility on the one side for the occupation and on the other for the blockade. This campaign for government support, begun in November 1914, he pushed continuously thereafter, first in one direction, then in another and frequently in several at once until after the United States entered the war and the question of Allied finance became less acute. In the meantime various plans were developed by which some resources were obtained.

Exchange operations which resulted in actual relief were carried out to a limited extent by the C.R.B. At its various offices abroad the Commission received sums of money to be remitted to Belgium. These sums were, in effect, invested in food which was sold on ration cards to persons in Belgium who could afford to buy and the war paper currency thus received was made over to the persons designated by the remitter.[2] The worldwide campaign for gifts was con-

[1] See chapter i, Document 13, also Document 117 below.

[2] These unique exchange operations are explained in Documents 123, 125, and 129, below.

tinued, but resources at no time from any direction were sufficient to provide for the whole of necessities.

Even after the British and French Governments agreed to furnish subsidies, the inadequacy of finance was an ever-present trouble, for the Commission had to compete for funds as for supplies and ships with departments of war administrations whose demands, surpassing the most extravagant forecasts, devoured the resources which the national treasuries found it increasingly difficult to provide. In spite of temporary failures and tense hours when the spectre of insolvency hovered darkly over the whole enterprise, the funds were secured and the flow of food into the occupied territories did not fail. The negotiations that prevented failure were, as the documents show, of a peculiarly strenuous and informal character. The circuitous methods of diplomacy were dropped. Hoover, as an unofficial but none the less real representative of nine million French and Belgians, labored directly and personally with the highest officials of the belligerent powers, and he did not stop laboring until he had secured the vital funds.

How important these loans or subsidies were is apparent when it is realized that they constituted over 78 per cent of the total of almost $900,000,000 mobilized by the Commission. Gifts were large[3]—unprecedented in the history of philanthropy—and they were extremely important contributions to the success of the enterprise, not only for the charitable aid to the destitute which they made possible but also for the wide public support of the work which these gifts indicated.

The amounts of subsidies which are the subject of this chapter are shown in the table on the following page.

The sums referred to here and in the following documents as "subsidies" were advanced by the British, French, and after April 1917 by the United States Treasuries to the C.R.B. as loans to Belgium and to France. In after-war settlements the Commission accounted[4] for the stewardship of these funds to Belgium and France. It was, of course, neither concerned with the question of reparation to these countries for the occupation years nor officially involved in

[3] Gifts in money and in kind reached the remarkable total of $52,290,835.51. See chapter xv.

[4] Chapter xiii.

inter-government debt settlements which included these loans for relief. It is interesting to know, however, that through these debt settlements a considerable percentage of these loans was, in effect, canceled. The principal agreements are included in a later chapter[5] but may be briefly summarized here.

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES

ADVANCES TO THE C.R.B. AS LOANS TO BELGIUM AND FRANCE

Origin	For Belgian Account	For French Account	Total	Per cent
U.S. Treasury....	$259,632,260.44	$127,000,000.00	$386,632,260.44	55.1
British Treasury.	94,181,410.78[a]	14,863,917.95	109,045,328.73	15.6
French Treasury..	94,181,410.78[a]	110,681,443.43	204,862,854.21	29.3
Totals.....	$447,995,082.00	$252,545,361.38	$700,540,443.38	100.0
	63.9%	36.1%	100%	

[a] The distribution between the British and French Treasuries of these subsidies for Belgian account is unofficial and subject to adjustment between these two treasuries.

Belgium was relieved of its pre-Armistice war debt to Great Britain, France, and the United States by the Treaty of Versailles.[6] French and British advances to the C.R.B. for Belgian relief were thus imposed on Germany as well as the pre-Armistice portion (about 60 per cent) of the United States Treasury subsidies for the same purpose. In its direct settlement with Belgium the United States agreed to funding terms of the full Belgian debt which conceded an amount[7] greater than the United States Treasury advances to the C.R.B. for Belgian relief.

[5] Chapter xiv.

[6] Part VIII, Article 232: ". . . . Germany undertakes . . . . to make reimbursement of all sums which Belgium has borrowed from the Allied and Associated Governments up to November 11, 1918, together with interest at the rate of five per cent (5%) per annum on such sums. . . . ." The agreement regarding the Dawes Annuities signed at Paris on the 14th January 1925 sets aside a portion of each annuity to be applied to the reimbursement of the Belgian war debt as defined in the Versailles Treaty. Since the United States did not sign the Versailles Treaty, this agreement specifies that the amount due the United States should be paid to Belgium. The United States–Belgian Debt Settlement Agreement takes this into account. Extracts from these agreements are given in chapter xiv.

[7] See chapter xiv. Under the terms of the United States–Belgian Debt Settlement Agreement the annual payments on account of the pre-Armistice loans are less than the amounts that Belgium would presumably receive from the portion of the Dawes Annuities ear-marked for this account,

The sums advanced to the C.R.B. as loans to France are insignificant compared to her total borrowings from Great Britain and the United States during the war period. The French-British and French-American debt settlement[8] agreements were signed in 1926, but at this date—1928—neither has been ratified by the French Chamber of Deputies.

1. *Early Negotiations for Government Support. November 1914–January 1915*

Hoover's proposals that the British Government grant a monthly subsidy for relief and permit the Commission to engage in exchange operations met with a far from encouraging reception. The opinion, already mentioned, that the relief of Belgium was an indirect benefit to Germany carried much weight at this time, and the Government was unwilling to sanction new measures which would make this indirect aid more extensive. To overcome this opinion the Commission had to get new guarantees from the Germans, while Hoover continued energetically to press the case with British officials.

DOCUMENT NO. 117

Note on meeting between Sir Edward Grey and Hoover, *at which Hoover presented the needs of Belgium and applied for British Government subsidy*

London, 5 November 1914

Hoover presented the needs of the Belgian civil population and handed Sir Edward Grey the memorandum attached. Sir Edward undertook to discuss the application with his colleagues but stated that the continued requisition of native food by the Germans made it very difficult for the British to take a favorable view of themselves contributing money, as this was in effect supplying food to the German Army.

Hoover undertook to make representations to the German Government in this matter and Sir Edward stated that success on this line would certainly greatly influence his views. He informed us that

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and American post-Armistice advances are refunded at such rates of interest and over such lengths of time as to cancel a considerable portion of them. The amount of total concessions has been computed as $291,000,000 on the assumption that 5 per cent interest is a fair rate. Cf. Bank of Manhattan Company, *The ABC's of Foreign Debts.*

[8] See chapter xiv. The total concessions to France under the funding terms agreed to by the United States in 1926 have been computed as $2,500,000,000, on the assumption that 5 per cent interest is a fair rate. Cf. Bank of Manhattan Company, *The ABC's of Foreign Debts.*

the Government had in any event granted us £100,000, which would be paid through the Belgian Minister.

MEMORANDUM

In the latter part of October a committee was created in Brussels called the National Relief Committee, composed of leading residents and local officials, with a view to dealing with the whole of the famine conditions which faced the Belgian people. These gentlemen appealed to the American and Spanish Ambassadors and Ministers for protection for the foodstuffs secured by them. This matter was negotiated by the representatives of these Governments in London, Brussels, The Hague, and Washington, and an undertaking was arrived at whereby the foodstuffs imported under these Ambassadors and Ministers should be free from molestation. In order to provide a body who could carry into execution the very considerable labor involved in securing and handling this food various representatives of the Spanish and American Governments have created a Commission, of which I have the honor to be Chairman. We have in turn established offices in London, Rotterdam, and at necessary points throughout Belgium, where warehouses under our protection are being established and the foodstuffs which come to our hands are placed in these warehouses under our protection, and are dealt out to the National Committee and its branches for detailed distribution.

We have felt that our work fell under three heads:

The first was the protection of these foodstuffs in Belgium.

The second, the purchase and transportation of foodstuffs with such subventions as we receive from the Central Committee[9] and other sources, and,

Thirdly, the stimulation of philanthropic effort.

The situation appeared to us so critical that we have devoted all the energy we are capable of to securing some immediate relief, and although we have had our organization in existence scarcely ten days, we have nevertheless delivered some 4,500 tons of food into Belgium, we have some 10,000 tons which will be delivered within another ten days, and we have something like 25,000 tons in sight in various quarters of the world.

One of our first problems was, however, to determine as accurately as possible the volume of the problem with which we had to deal. An inquiry was undertaken by the members of this Commission with the assistance of the National Committee, its local branches, and the Belgian local officials, and I have with me a statement prepared by Mr. Francqui, working head of the Belgian National Committee. This statement shows that the problem does not consist merely of supplying food to the more unfortunate and unemployed members of the community, but resolves itself into the provisioning of the entire nation of some 6½ million to 7 million people. Food must be furnished to the rich as well as to the poor. There are some meat and vegetable provisions still in Belgium, but there is practical exhaustion of cereals, and these gentlemen estimate that the absolute

[9] Comité Central, Brussels. See chapter i.

monthly minimum on which this population can be kept alive is 80,000 tons of cereals.[10] That this is no exaggeration is evidenced by the fact that the normal production and net imports of cereals into Belgium are between 275,000 and 300,000 tons per month, and the calculation of 80,000 tons is based on a ration of approximately 10 ounces per capita per diem.

Desirious that there should be no error in our statements as to the minimum requirements of this people, we asked the American Minister in Brussels himself to check the data upon which these estimates are based, and I have here a statement from him and the Spanish Minister, corroborating the estimate which has been given to us. I have also a large amount of data as to the actual pressing position, estimates as to the future necessities, from various authorities throughout Belgium, the details of which I will not go into.

This minimum of monthly requirement of 80,000 tons will involve an expenditure of between £800,000 and £1,000,000 per month, and this expenditure will be necessary over the next eight months at least. A substantial proportion of this food will be resold by the Central Committee and its branches, but we have yet to solve the problem of how the credit documents which may be secured can be converted into cash. We are hopeful that we shall be able to recover from 30 per cent to 50 per cent in a form which we can monthly liquidate and revolve into further purchases.

This problem therefore becomes so large as to be far beyond solution by charitable and philanthropic effort. It is one of those problems which can only be solved by a substantial substratum of government guarantee, and this substratum must at least amount to from £400,000 to £500,000 a month. We have inaugurated and carried on in neutral countries a vigorous publicity on behalf of the Commission, with a view to stimulating as far as possible the sympathies and help of the good people of America, Australia, Spain, Canada, and elsewhere. We have had the most gratifying response, and I do not think we exaggerate if we say that we have in prospect at present twenty cargoes of foodstuffs. You will realize, however, that in the present financial situation throughout the world the collection of money for these purposes is extremely difficult, and when I inform you that the Belgian National Relief Committee in the United States has been unable out of its resources to give us an appropriation of £30,000, you may be able to appreciate how limited are resources of this character. On the other hand, the generous people, especially of the Western United States and Canada, and other countries are prepared to subscribe generously actual foodstuffs from their own stores, and, in order to take advantage of this, our immediate problem is to find the resources to transport these foodstuffs to the Belgian people. Roughly, £1 spent in transportation will bring £4 to £5 worth of foodstuffs into Belgium, and if we could say to all of these people that this Commission has been placed in position to undertake and pay for this transportation cost, I am sure that we would doubly stimulate their contributions. I should like in fact to

[10] See chapter iii, Document 64.

be able to telegraph at once tonight to twenty centers in the United States and Canada which are at work on this problem that we have the finance put at our disposal whereby we can undertake this entire transportation. I would like to suggest that despite the great strain the English people are under, this service of transport is one which the English people might seriously consider. The provision for us of a subvention of say £150,000 a month would enable us to undertake this work with assurance and would help to fill in such gaps as are bound to occur in the necessarily irregular flow of charity.

As in all philanthropic efforts the first flow no doubt will be large, but we have to face a fact that as months go by, a larger and larger proportion of this problem will fall upon the actual purchase of food, and if we are to provide for these people with a constant and regular flow, it is necessary for us to be assured that we will have financial strength with which to carry the business on systematically. We should be placed in a position at once to charter ships for periods of months and to take commitments entirely beyond those which we can take out of occasional and irregular cash subventions.

Aside from a subvention of £150,000 a month from the English Government we have a feeling that in all of the circumstances the French people owe something to the civil population of Belgium and that they should also meet us with a similar contribution. We have promised to us a liberal contribution from the Rockefeller Foundation, and this would go much farther if we could relieve that institution of the load of transportation.

Aside from material assistance there are other matters in which the British Government could greatly facilitate this work. The first of these is that if some instructions could be given to the British Consular Agents and to the Admiralty to recognize the beneficent and neutral character of our shipping operations, cargoes consigned to us from any port in the world would be facilitated in their transportation. It would also simplify all such efforts towards Belgium if this Commission should be recognized by the English Government as the only body properly founded for this work, and we would undertake to handle all such cargoes. Further than this, we have already found difficulty in our endeavors to charter neutral bottoms as such shipping is now at a considerable premium and there is no large volume of it. If we could use British bottoms to bring this food to some British port for retransport (if necessary to the Continent) and if we could have the advantage of the British Government's liberal insurance against war risk, our problem would be further facilitated.[11]

The active members of this Commission are composed altogether of energetic and business people, and they are prepared to devote their time and pay their own expenses in this work.

The work of the Commission will be carried on at comparatively small expenditure and we have already received from our own sources such funds and have made such provisions that no organiza-

[11] See chapter v.

tion expenditure will fall upon any contribution which is made to us. Every penny which we receive will be devoted to one purpose of securing foodstuffs and their transportation and absolute delivery into the hands of the community in Belgium.

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 118

Letter, HOOVER TO GREY, *pointing out the inadequacy of available relief finances and suggesting a subsidy from the Allied Governments*

LONDON, 25 November 1914

SIR:

With regard to the petition which we had the honor to make to you on the 5th of November for financial assistance from the British Government toward this work of the Commission, I trust you will forgive me if I revert to the subject.

Although at that time I felt we were all deeply impressed with the necessities of the civil population of Belgium, every event which has happened since has gone to reinforce the fact that the gravity of the situation was even deeper than was then outlined by us. We have made some progress in the direction of the obtaining of funds, but they are wholly and absolutely inadequate to our requirements. We have a fund secured to us by guarantees by certain members of the Belgian Committee and private gentlemen in Brussels to the extent of £600,000, from which we are able to undertake the free transportation of gift food from any part of the world. The advertisement of this fund has brought to us most satisfactory returns by way of assurances of the collection of food from agencies which we have established, more particularly in Canada and in the United States. The flow of charity is nevertheless at best most irregular and unreliable, whereas the necessities of the population of Belgium are a fixed daily volume, and we are therefore compelled to purchase considerable quantities of food supplies to supplement the gifts which are made to us.

We have had a number of conferences with the representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation (who have come to Europe at the inspiration of the American Ambassador to seriously consider the application of the reserves of that Foundation at least in part to our problem), and the suggestion has been made by these commissioners to the Foundation that a subvention of £100,000 per month from the Foundation might be made conditional upon our securing on this side subventions amounting to £200,000 per month, that Institution considering that this minimum sum must be provided by way of guaranteed income.

Some effort is being made by the Belgian Government but it is largely directed to the provision of working-capital with which we may purchase foodstuffs for resale in Belgium, which is, in effect, serving only that portion of the population who are yet possessed of reserves.

All of us who have spent many years in England realize the heavy load which the English people have to carry and, confident as we are of the eventual outcome, our feeling is that advances made by the British Government would be undoubtedly recovered in the final clean-up.

Mr. Frederick Palmer, whom we look upon as the most statesmanlike of the American newspaper correspondents, recently visited Germany and at our request endeavored to formulate some opinion as to the attitude of the Germans to the question of the feeding of the Belgians, and I send you herewith a copy of the statement which he has handed to us.

I have the honor to be, etc.

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 119

Letter, HOOVER TO PAGE, *concerning discussions with the Belgian Government relative to advances which the C.R.B. would disburse to pensioners of the Government within Belgium in local currency, thus effecting exchange through the C.R.B.*

LONDON, 25 November 1914

DEAR MR. PAGE:

In furtherance of the plan which I am endeavoring to develop to furnish backbone to this Relief, I have today had a meeting with Mr. Van de Vyvere, Minister of Finance in the Belgian Government, and he informs me that there are certain payments which the Belgian Government would like to make in Belgium, being as follows:

Civil Service Pensions	Frs. 3,000,000 per month
Old Age Pensions	Frs. 1,500,000 per month
Separation Allowances to soldiers and military pensions	Frs. 6,000,000 per month
	Frs.10,500,000 per month

He thinks that if we could arrange to pay these pensions with the money which we collect for the sale of food in Belgium, the Belgian Government could furnish us with a like sum in English money at this end. This would, so far as our work is concerned, be equivalent to a subsidy of something over £400,000 a month. In other words, this is another way of effecting exchange out of Belgium. I am proposing to take this matter up for discussion with Mr. Whitlock, with a view to getting the approval of the German military authorities in Belgium to these payments, as I cannot see why there should be any military objection to its being done. Furthermore, in advancement of my original idea that the communes should give us some obligation for the foodstuffs furnished to them and that they should in turn resell these foodstuffs to the population, I gather from him that there may be a possibility that the Belgian Government would agree to take up these communal obligations here in London and then we could convert them into cash. All of this is another way of accomplishing

what I have thought of effecting by way of a relief bank, and is much more facile, as we thus have a market for our obligations without asking public help.

The matter which troubles the Belgian Minister, however, is whether or not the Germans would not take advantage of this situation to make more demands for cash upon the population, which would in fact be equal to impressing our food. In other words, if we furnished a million francs worth of food to a Belgian commune, and accepted their obligations for it, and they in turn sold a portion of this food to the people and used the money to carry on their communal government, the Belgians are afraid that the commune might be assessed a cash requisition.

Although subject to your opinion, I propose to first take this up in Brussels with the German authorities through Mr. Whitlock, it seems to me that it is a matter of such vital importance that if we can arrive at a working arrangement in Brussels, possibly our Government in Washington might confirm it with the German Government, in order that the Belgian and English Governments might feel sufficiently assured in this matter. It is my impression that we should come nearer getting the help of Washington if we had made a preliminary agreement. In any event, I would be glad to have your advice.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 120

Telegram, HOOVER TO GERARD, *suggesting the possibility of German Government contributions to the financing of Belgian relief*

ROTTERDAM, 27 November 1914

JAMES GERARD
AMERICAN AMBASSADOR
BERLIN

The sympathetic attitude of the German Government toward the efforts of the American people to provision the civil population of Belgium leads me to again transgress your attention to the desirability of the German Government entering into this wide humanitarian movement by a direct contribution to our fund. The minimum required amounts to fully twenty million marks per month, and any criticism leveled at the Germans for lack of sympathy to the poor of Belgium would be immediately silenced if they made a contribution of five million marks per month; furthermore, the English and French Governments would be forced to act likewise in order to support their contentions. While the American people are responding wonderfully and generously to our appeal, the flow of charity can never supply the demand and such support can from the nature of things be only temporary.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 121

Letter, HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, *concerning guarantees from the German authorities with respect to funds to be turned over to the C.R.B. by the Belgian Government*

LONDON, 1 December 1914

His Excellency Brand Whitlock
Brussels

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

From the numerous conversations which I have had with the Belgian Ministers in relation to the provision of funds for the Comité de Secours, I think I have in mind about the kind of an assurance which they will require from Mr. Page in order to induce them to hand over the money, and I feel that if you could address Mr. Page in somewhat the following terms, but couched in your own diplomatic language, this would meet the case:

"I have discussed the whole question of the advances from the Belgian Government to the Comité de Secours through the medium of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which moneys are to be advanced by the Comité de Secours to the communal authorities in Belgium.

"The German authorities inform me that they have not the slightest objection to the plan, that it receives their complete support, and that its general and detailed execution will meet with no interference with them.

"While it would be possible for me to confirm this in writing with the Germans such a procedure would not serve the slightest use and you may take it that they are only too anxious for us to succeed in our task, and any assurance which it is necessary for you to give to the British or Belgian Government in this matter can be given by you either in your own name or in mine with the utmost confidence."

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 122

Letter, WHITLOCK TO PAGE, *giving assurances of the German Government's approval of the use of Belgian Government funds as proposed by the C.R.B.*

BRUSSELS, 1 December 1914

The Hon. Walter Hines Page
American Ambassador, London

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE:

I have discussed with the German military authorities here the question of the status of the funds which the Belgian Government proposes to place at the disposition of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to enable the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation to advance to the communes the moneys with which to buy food.

I am glad to be able to inform you that the German authorities have given me their assurance that they have not the slightest objection to the arrangement, that it has their entire support, that they will respect it in every particular, and that in its execution it will meet with no interference whatever from them.

I can, of course, have this assurance formally confirmed in writing if you desire, though my own notion is that that would be purely a work of supererogation. The German authorities are as anxious as anyone that we succeed in our undertaking and the documents can be easily procured if you desire them. I am entirely satisfied, however, that all is in order that all will go well.

Any assurances that you find it necessary to give to the Belgian or to the British Government may be given in all confidence either in your name or in mine.

I am, my dear Colleague,

With ever kind regards,

Your devoted

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

DOCUMENT NO. 123

Letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *describing the problem of financing relief, suggesting the possibility of an exchange operation and indicating the necessity of large and regular subsidies*

LONDON, 6 January 1915

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD PERCY:

I am sending you herewith this week's report of the Commission. Reduced to concrete figures this document means that we have a food supply engaged, either by gift or by purchase, sufficient to carry us until the middle of April, and we are in round numbers about £1,000,000 short of being able to pay for such portions of this material as we have to buy. In a general way, it costs us about £1,200,000 a month to provide the minimum which we are endeavoring to reach, and of this about £600,000 is sold to that portion of the population which can raise the money to pay for food. About £400,000 is a dead loss, through the support of the free canteens. The latter sum has got to be secured from the charity of the world, and in this matter a subsidy of £100,000 monthly from the Rockefeller Foundation and such fortuitous amounts in gift food or money as come our way is all we have to rely upon.

As to the provisioning of the more well-to-do part of the population, this is in reality an exchange problem. We import the food into Belgium and we sell it. We get the money in Belgian National Bank notes, which gravitate into our bank account in Brussels. The difficulty of getting it out is threefold. In the first place if we exported

this money in actual bank notes we should denude the country of the small amount of circulating medium which has been left; secondly, if we had the Belgian National Bank notes in London they would not be realizable in gold; and, thirdly, the Germans will not allow us to bring them out. Therefore we are driven to find some employment for effecting exchange. There are certain Belgian bank balances and their credits scattered over the world which we could possibly arrange to have turned over to us, we in turn paying these institutions in Brussels out of the moneys which we have to our credit there from food sales. I do not know how far this liberty of action would save our situation, but I fear that it would not be anything like complete.

I cannot see from an English Government point of view that there should be any objection to our doing exchange business where we can obtain it, because we are not introducing gold into Belgium nor abstracting gold from England any more than is abstracted in the normal purchase of foodstuffs from abroad. The people to whom we would make payments in Belgium would be entirely Belgians or Belgian institutions. Aside from this method, however, which is fortuitous, it appears to us that we have got to have some support implemented by governments. If we could make payments in Brussels on account of the Belgians, to support the communal governments or other organs of the Belgian Government, and if the Belgian Government in turn could borrow money from the Allies and hand it to us, this would completely solve the question and the amount involved would be £300,000 a month, less direct exchange for private individuals that we might be able to do.

For your information generally I enclose you a copy of a letter which I have from the American Ambassador in Berlin, which is of interest on certain points. I also enclose copy of a memorandum which I prepared on the purely military point of view of this problem of provisioning the civil population of Belgium. The German end of this has been submitted to the German Military Authorities and I understand from them that it embraces their complete views in the matter.

I also attach herewith a little pamphlet we have gotten out, which explains our organization. I would add to the data in this pamphlet that in conducting the canteens for the destitute in Belgium, the communes make a return to our organization, showing the amount of their expenditure in this work, and upon the auditing of these statements, the communes are given a benevolence amounting to two-thirds of such expenditure, and where necessary they are given a loan amounting to the remaining one-third, the object of this discrimination being to force economy on the communal authorities. The total of these benevolences and loans amounts to the cost of maintaining the canteens, upon which there were last week about 1,400,000 people.

I shall be delighted to supply you with any other information that I can give you.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 124

Letter, VAN DE VYVERE TO HOOVER, *confirming an advance by the Belgian Government to the C.R.B. for relief purposes*

FOLKESTONE, 9 January 1915

Mr. Hoover
Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Following the conversation that I had the pleasure of having with you yesterday evening it is understood that toward the end of each month you will have sent to me the list of the engagements which the C.R.B. estimate they will have to make for the following month and that as soon as the agreement is established of the figure of the engagements, I will have opened for you a corresponding credit in English or American gold. By this means you will always be covered and you will no longer have to take any personal engagement.

This examination of the situation for the month of January has been made by M. Carton de Wiart and myself as a check on M. Sengier, and it is understood that I will put for this period a sum of £1,000,000 at your disposition, on my return to Havre.

The second question about which you spoke to me concerns the case of losses incurred, notably in the case where, on account of a drop in the prices of products in Belgium, the Comité National might not be in a position to realize at their cost-prices importations made by means of the advances of the Belgian State. It is formally understood that the Commission for Relief in Belgium as well as the Comité National are only, for the sums which the State advances to them, attorneys of the State, and have therefore no responsibilities beyond the execution of their commission.

Consequently a loss of this nature like all similar losses, will be supported by the Belgian State.

I have this morning sent copy of this letter to Mr. Francqui, President of the Executive Committee.

I take advantage of this opportunity to tell you again in the name of the Belgian Government how much we appreciate your efforts, as efficacious as disinterested, to assist the unhappy population of Belgium, and how much we are grateful to you.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) A. VAN DE VYVERE
Financial Minister to the King of the Belgians

[*Translation*]

This appropriation of £1,000,000 was the second advance of this amount which had resulted from Hoover's negotiations with the Belgian Government begun in November. The first million had been turned over in the middle of Decem-

ber. This Government was a refugee at Havre, beyond the frontiers of its country, cut off from its normal sources of income, and dependent on loans from the British and French Treasuries for its future expenditures. It had obligations, however, within Belgium in the form of pensions and salaries of Belgian State employees which it greatly desired to meet. The German Governor-General in Belgium had agreed that these payments should be made through the medium of the Commission. The Belgian Government, from balances brought out upon the retreat, or from charitable funds coming to it directly, or possibly from Allied loans, thereupon made initial payments to the Commission. The relief organization in turn undertook to liquidate Belgian Government obligations in Belgium to like sums from the money received from the sale of its imported provisions. The exiled Belgian Government was in no position to guarantee the continuation of these advances from its own resources. Hoover, therefore, continued vigorously to press the British Government—which was the banker of the Allies—to formally authorize exchange operations and to furnish an adequate and regular subsidy in order that the Commission could maintain the necessary program of importations.

DOCUMENT NO. 125

Memorandum, by Hoover, *of a conversation with* Sir Edward Grey, *concerning the guarantee which the C.R.B. must secure from the German authorities as condition of financial support from the British Government*

London, 13 January 1915

I had a meeting today with Sir Edward Grey at which he informed me semi-humorously that we need not hope for financial support from the British Government. I presume this was apropos of a certain amount of agitation being carried on by the Commission in this direction. He then stated that seriously so long as the Germans continued to levy indemnities[12] on the Belgian people the British Government could not be expected to contribute to this work.

I represented to Sir Edward that the British people had entered

[12] Beginning in January 1915 the Germans imposed a forced monthly issue of bonds on each of the Belgian provinces. The Belgian banks were then required to purchase these bonds with paper currency guaranteed by the banks and issued through the Société Générale de Belgique which under German decree had become the bank of issue in place of the Banque Nationale de Belgique. Thus the German Government became possessed of the monthly sum of forty million francs with which currency they proceeded to purchase supplies and services in Belgium for the benefit of the German Army.

upon the greatest war of history for the sole purpose of maintaining the Belgian people; that it appeared to me that after this war had been fought at the enormous loss of human life and property which was in progress, it would be a cynical ending if the civil population of Belgium had become extinct in the process; that it was of little use to fight the war and find that only an empty husk remained; that if the food supplies of this Commission were to cease for a week the decimation of this population would be begun and it would be completed within ninety days.

I informed him that at our last interview he had spoken strongly as to the British inability to help us because of the food levies by the Germans, and that in consequence I had made representations to Mr. Gerard. In these representations I had informed Mr. Gerard that the food levies greatly disturbed the British Government, who felt that we were simply supplying deficiencies created by the Germans, and that I felt the continued permission of the English to carry on our work was seriously jeopardized by these levies. As a consequence of these representations Mr. Gerard had ultimately been able to secure from the German Government an undertaking that no more food would be impressed in Belgium. I informed Sir Edward further that I had felt that when we succeeded in this matter we would be entitled to support from the British Government and was disappointed that further stipulations were now raised, and that I thought it would be fair to me to know if we could expect financial support from the Government if we could succeed in these further representations. Sir Edward said that he considered, without committing his colleagues, that we should be entitled to such support.

To make the matter clear, I then put it to him that I should put it up to Mr. Gerard to see if he could, by the same friendly course as previously, succeed in effecting their desire in this matter and that such acquiescence on the part of the Germans would be contingent upon direct financial support by the British Government of this Commission. To this he agreed.

I then raised the question of remittances into Belgium and explained the system by which we became possessed of large sums of money from the sale of foodstuffs and the necessity of our being able to exchange all this money in order to continue our work. He expressed approval of giving us permission in this matter, subject to the restrictions that such moneys as we obtained in England against payments in Belgium were to be used solely for the purchase of foodstuffs and that such payments in Belgium were to be made to Belgians only.

I then raised the question of transportation[13] as it concerned the Commission's being allowed to use interned German ships for our transportation purposes, and agreed to furnish him with a memorandum on this subject, copy of which is attached, and I gathered that he took a favorable view of these proposals. He promised to let me know at an early date what the attitude of the British Government would be.

[13] See chapter v.

DOCUMENT NO. 126

Letter, Hoover to Grey, *concerning the use of German shipping for relief purposes and the operation of exchange on Brussels*

London, 13 January 1915

Dear Sir Edward:

The two questions which I raised with you today were Shipping and Exchange on Brussels.

Shipping[14]

Owing to the difficulty of obtaining shipping and the exorbitant prices which we have to pay for transport of food from the Atlantic seaboard, it occurred to us that it might be possible, in view of the special nature of the work of this Commission, that we could make use of some of the interned German ships. With that view as a preliminary, while recently on the Continent, I opened negotiations with certain German shipping firms to find out whether we could obtain these ships on reasonable terms, and having found that this was possible, I then took the matter up with a Dutch shipping firm and with the Dutch Government, to determine if such ships could be taken over by the Dutch shipping firm in question on terms to be arranged between them and the Germans, in such a manner as to bring them under Dutch registry and enable them to fly the Dutch flag, we in turn to charter the ships from this Dutch firm. I am now advised that this portion of the transaction is also feasible, both from a shipping and Dutch Government point of view. The remaining question, therefore, is the assent of the Allied Governments to these ships putting to sea under these conditions. At the present time, we are asked 9/6*d* per quarter for the transport of wheat from New York to Rotterdam. We should obviously only make use of these interned ships if we could get them at not more than the rate in normal times, or say about 3/6*d* per quarter. The actual saving on the tonnage which we have to transport would amount to over £80,000. If the British Government could see their way to countenance this transaction, we should be glad to submit to any reasonable conditions. These I presume would take the form of stipulations that the ships should be used solely for the conveyance of food for the purpose of this Commission, and as a safeguard, I might suggest that if a supercargo appointed by the British Government could travel at all times with each ship, it would facilitate confidence in such assurance. This Commission would of course undertake to report immediately they had ceased to use any given ship. I cannot but think that the substitution of these ships for British ships would tend to ameliorate the present difficulties of conveying food to the United Kingdom, for at the present moment we have under charter between 40 and 50 British ships. Our entire traffic could probably be carried on by the regular ply of about 20 normal tramp steamers of the ordinary cargo type.

[14] See chapter v.

EXCHANGE ON BRUSSELS

As I explained this morning, on the provisioning side of our work we sell, under restrictions, a certain proportion of foodstuffs which we import into Belgium, and we have a final residue of money accumulating at our Brussels office. The continued revolution of our working capital, which has been supplied by the Belgian bankers, and therefore the continuance of this side of our work, depends to a considerable extent on our ability to convert the moneys which we get in Brussels into pounds and dollars. With this end in view, I took up the question of the balances held by various Belgian banks in London and New York, and I could secure the payment to me of a considerable amount of such money as against the payment, on the other hand, of local currency in Brussels. This transaction does not amount to the importation of actual new money into Belgium, and is not in effect trading with the enemy, because such payments would be made under proper safeguards to Belgians only. As a matter of working machinery I would propose to operate the exchange through the Banque Belge pour l'Étranger in London and the Société Générale in Brussels, both of which are purely Belgian institutions. We have done a certain amount of exchange in a small way to individuals in Belgium, as an actual matter of relief, i.e., we have accepted moderate sums of money here and made similar payments to Belgians in Belgium who were in distress, thus enabling such people to buy food from us and keep our circuit revolving.

The question of this exchange has an humanitarian aspect outside of the work of this Commission, in that some of the Belgian banks, having exported their balances prior to the occupation, are now in the position of no longer being able to pay out to their depositors in Belgium, thus inflicting a new order of hardship on these people. By taking advantage of this system, which I propose to set up, these people would be relieved. We should of course be glad to agree that any moneys coming into our hands in this manner would be used for the purchase of foodstuffs on this side, and that any payments which we make on the other side should be made to Belgians only.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 127

Telegram, HOOVER TO GERARD, *stating that British support of relief was conditioned upon the cessation of indemnities on Belgium by the German authorities*

LONDON, 13 January 1915

GERARD, BERLIN

Had a conference today with Sir Edward Grey on the question of the British Government and the financial support of the work of this Commission. Sir Edward said that so long as the Germans continued to levy indemnities on the Belgians in their present exhausted state,

the British Government could not give any financial assistance to this Commission whatever, but that if the Germans would undertake that no such indemnities should be levied the British Government would consider themselves under the obligation of supporting the Commission largely. Inasmuch as the indemnities levied in Belgium at the present time cannot be yielding any very considerable actual payments it occurs to me that possibly your recent success in securing amelioration of the food levies might be extended to money also and might even be coupled with the stipulation that the British should support the Commission.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 128

Memorandum, by HOOVER, *of a telephone conversation with* SIR GILBERT PARKER, *concerning the postponement of publication of conditions upon which British financial support of the Commission was contingent*

LONDON, 20 January 1915

Learned from Sir Gilbert Parker by phone that British Government intended publishing Sir Edward Grey's offer.[15] I subsequently saw Lord Percy and represented to him that this course would defeat any hope of negotiations with the German Government. If the British Government's object in making the offer was to gain political capital it was their own business and I would take no further interest. If they were genuinely anxious to secure the alleviation of the Belgians and also to help the Commission, it must be suppressed. He agreed and said he would speak to Sir Edward.

Subsequently saw Sir Gilbert Parker and Sir Claude Schuster and they rather unwillingly agreed.

DOCUMENT NO. 129

Memorandum, by HOOVER, *of a meeting with* LLOYD GEORGE, *British Chancellor of the Exchequer,* SIR JOHN SIMON, *Attorney General, and others, concerning the necessity of the continuation of Belgian relief, and of exchange transactions; and Lloyd George's conversion to this point of view*

LONDON, 21 January 1915

I, today, had a meeting with Mr. Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, at which there were present Lord Emmott, representing the Committee on Trading with the Enemy, Lord Eustace Percy, representing the Foreign Office, and later on the Attorney General, Sir John Simon, and a representative from his department.

The occasion of the meeting was the discussion of the question of the exchange of money with Belgium, and I stated that we were importing foodstuffs at the rate of from £1,250,000 to £1,300,000 per

[15] See Document 125.

month. That to reduce this discussion to simple terms, we might state that the whole of this foodstuff was sold and that the monies therefrom came into the possession of our Brussels office in the shape of Belgian National Bank notes, which were practically the only circulating medium in the country; and that, on the other hand, we had to support about 1,400,000 destitute people, for which purpose we made allocations of cash to the communes with which to conduct the public canteens. That in terms of values these allocations would necessarily amount to from £500,000 to £600,000 per month, thus leaving from £700,000 to £800,000 per month of accumulated monies in our hands; and that if we were to succeed in this enterprise of feeding the Belgian people it was necessary for us to bring this money out of Belgium in order to reinvest it in food; that Belgian National Bank notes were of no value out of Belgium, and that therefore we had hit upon the plan of accepting cash in London or New York from Belgian individuals or institutions and making the corresponding payments from our Brussels office to their order; that this scheme did not imply the transfer of any actual gold or silver into Belgium.

Mr. Lloyd George stated that he had put his veto upon the project, because he felt that, indirect as the matter was, it was certainly assisting the enemy, and that this assistance would take place in several ways. In the first instance, we were giving the Belgians more food resources with which to stand requisitions in food by the Germans; that we were giving them more resources generally with which to stand monetary levies; and that beyond all this, in relieving the Germans from the necessity of feeding the civil population we were directly prolonging the war, which was bound to be one of wholly economic character and that economic pressure was the principal method by which the Allies would ultimately win. He expressed the belief that the Germans would, in the last resort, provision the people of Belgium; that our action was akin to the provisioning the civil population of a besieged city and thus prolonging the resistance of the garrison; that he was wholly opposed to our operations, benevolent and humane as they were; and that therefore he could not see his way to grant our request.

I pointed out that, first, as to the requisitioning of food, the Germans had given an undertaking that after the first of January no such requisitions would be made, and I read out to him the undertaking which had been given to the American Minister in Berlin and informed him that we were satisfied from the many agents that we had in Belgium that the Germans were carrying this out with the utmost scrupulousness. I furthermore informed him that the Germans had impressed none of our actual food. Also, I stated that I did not believe that the feeding of the civil population increased the resources which they had available for money levies; that we were introducing no new money into Belgium, but were simply giving circulation to the money already existing, and that there was no danger of the Germans taking the money which we collected for foodstuffs because that money was in the possession of the American Minister.

On the second point, as to whether the Germans would ultimately provision the civil population, I told him that I was satisfied that they would not do so; that when we undertook this labor we undertook it with the greatest reluctance and our first move was to satisfy ourselves that this population would starve unless America intervened and converted the hitherto negative quality of neutrality into one of positive neutrality; that as proof that the Germans would not provision the civil population I thought it was desirable that he should understand the German views on this question, and I recited to him the confirmation by the German military of the current statement in Germany that there was no clause in the Hague Convention obliging the Germans to provision the civil population of Belgium; on the contrary, it incidentally provided that the civil population should support the military. I told him further, that the Germans contended that the Belgians were a people of great resources, that these resources would become valuable at once on a partial recovery of industry, that this recovery of industry could take place instantly they were given a port through which they could trade with the neutral world, that in taking the port of Antwerp and opening it to neutral ships they had given the Belgian civil population a means of provisioning themselves, but that this outlet had been blocked by the British Navy and the British must therefore bear the responsibility. Further, that the Belgian population, by continuing its hostility and its passive resistance was assisting the Allies by compelling the Germans to operate the public services, rendering trade useless to them, also the arsenals, and requiring from them a considerable army of occupation; and that as the Allies do all this they must take the responsibility of these people starving. Furthermore, the Germans contend that while they have ample food supplies to carry their own people through the struggle, they have not sufficient to carry on their backs the 10,000,000 people in Belgium and France inside their lines; and that as they are struggling for national existence they must feed their own people and attend to their own military exigencies first. I pointed out that I did not offer these arguments as my own but to illustrate the fixity of mind by which the German people justify their action in refusing to feed the Belgians, and asked him if he could conceive for one moment that with this mental attitude of conviction on their part that they were right and the Allies were wrong, they would be likely to feed the Belgians. I pointed out that starvation had actually occurred in Belgium; that some, although perhaps little, riot had occurred, but sufficient to indicate the fixity of the Germans in their intention. I further pointed out the position of the French people in the Meuse Valley, who had not had our assistance and were dying of starvation although under German occupation; and I expressed the conviction that the Germans would never feed the civil population.

He denounced the whole of this as a monstrous attitude; to which I replied that, be that as it might, one matter stood out in my mind and that was that the English people had undertaken this war for the avowed purpose of protecting the existence of small nations, of vindicating the guaranteed neutrality by which small nations might

exist, for the avowed purpose of guaranteeing to the world the continuance of democracy as against autocracy in government; and that it would be an empty victory if one of the most democratic of the world's races should be extinguished in the process and ultimate victory should be marked by an empty husk. I said that the English people were great enough to disregard the doubtful military value of advantages in favor of assurances that these people should survive, and I felt the obligation went even further than mere acquiescence in our work and extended to an opportunity to the English to add to their laurels by showing magnanimity toward these people, a magnanimity which would outlast all the bitterness of this war. Mr. Lloyd George stated to his colleagues abruptly: "I am convinced. You have my permission. I would be obliged if you gentlemen would settle the details of the machinery necessary to carry it out." Then turning to me he said that I would forgive him for running away, but that he felt the world would yet be indebted to the American people for the most magnanimous action which neutrality had yet given way to.

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 130

An agreement, between HOOVER *and the* BRITISH TREASURY, *relative to exchange operations on Brussels*

LONDON, 21 January 1915

The Commission for Relief in Belgium understands that the British Government is prepared to grant permission to British banks to honor drafts drawn upon them in favor of the Commission by Belgian banks or firms having credits with them, provided that the Commission gives certain undertakings as to the use of such money.

I therefore hereby undertake, on behalf of the Commission for Relief in Belgium:

1. That the full amount of any such drafts will be expended by the Commission solely for the purchase of foodstuffs; and

2. That any money paid out of the funds of the Commission in Belgium against such drafts will be paid only to Belgian banks, firms, or persons in Belgium; and

3. That the Commission will furnish the Secretary of the Treasury and the Foreign Office a weekly list showing the origin of such sums and the names of the persons to whom payment is to be made in Belgium.

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

With this definite sanction of the plan of exchange on the 21st January, the Commission at once set up a commercial exchange department, and though this source of income was not as productive as first expected,[16] the relief organization

[16] Remittances to individuals and institutions in Belgium through the C.R.B. reached a final total of over $6,000,000. See Gay, *Statistics*, p. 66.

secured the use of considerable sums at a time when funds were very short. This favorable decision indicated a more sympathetic attitude of the British Government toward the relief work; but the Commission's major problem of securing an adequate and regular subvention from the Allies remained unsolved.

2. *Hoover's Negotiations in Berlin. February 1915*

DOCUMENT NO. 131

Note, by HOOVER, *and telegram,* HOOVER TO BRYAN, *describing the financial difficulties of relief and urging that pressure be brought to bear on the German Ambassador in America to urge his Government to adopt a reasonable attitude*

LONDON, 26 January 1915

On the 26th January I went to Folkestone, intending to go to Berlin to present the proposals of Sir Edward Grey to the German Government, but on consideration at Folkestone returned, as I knew it would be valuable to secure the assistance of the German Ambassador in Washington and to make some press announcement which would create public feeling in the United States. I therefore returned on the 27th January and despatched the following telegram through the Embassy to Mr. Bryan:

"BRYAN, Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.

"Potatoes and meat, upon which Belgians have been partially dependent up to present, are now being rapidly exhausted, and the cost of foodstuffs required to keep this population alive must increase shortly from six million to ten million per month. Furthermore, within thirty days three million French people north of German lines will be in similar position to Belgium.

"Another fifteen million dollars will have absolutely exhausted the whole banking and other resources which we can possibly look forward to, leaving a period of three to four months before next harvest entirely hopeless, unless support can be obtained from the belligerent governments. I believe the Allied Governments, despite their view that they have no responsibility and that it is a military disadvantage that these people should be fed from neutral sources and that the duty lies on the Germans, could be brought to make substantial contributions to our problem, provided the Germans would cease to wring monetary indemnities from these people, and would extend their undertaking as to requisitioning foodstuffs so as to cover all food supplies. To have this population thus fed must be, even on military grounds, a vast advantage to the Germans, which far outweighs the value of the money which they now secure from their present methods; and from a humane point of view, if this situation is driven to its logical extreme, the moral responsibility for the deci-

mation of this population must be laid at the German door. I am arriving in Berlin February first for the purpose of making representations to the German Government that if they would agree to stop all requisitions of every character, and would do so conditionally upon the Allies giving adequate financial support to this Commission, I have reason to believe I can carry out the Allies' end of the contract, and I need support from Germans in America. I therefore appeal to you, not in your official capacity, but as a leading American in position to discuss this question in influential way with Bernstorff and Dernburg and for pure reasons of humanity. The Germans cannot afford to have these issues tried in the court of American public opinion, and they can well afford, not only from a point of view of military advantage but also of American public opinion, and above all of humanity, to have this question settled on the above lines. I believe the Allied Governments have every confidence in the integrity and ability of this Commission to carry out the work, and great as the sacrifice may be on our part, we should find ample compensation in the carrying on of this task in the prestige which it would win for our country and its ideals."

"HOOVER"

DOCUMENT NO. 132

Statement, by HOOVER, *prepared for the press, describing the precarious situation of Belgian relief*

LONDON, 30 January 1915

The problem of feeding the starving population of Belgium has grown beyond the resources of public charity, according to a statement of Herbert Hoover, made as the result of a special session of the Commission for Relief in Belgium held today to consider the critical situation arising out of a series of special investigations just completed.

Mr. Hoover said: "The Commission takes the gloomiest possible view of the ultimate future. The problem is rapidly growing beyond the reach of private philanthropy. With the help that the Commission hopes from America during the next two months, and the financial arrangements which have been completed for loans and exchange we can maintain supplies at the rate of six million dollars per month to the end of March. Before that time, however, three new forces will intervene, which make the whole situation materially worse. The first of these is the rapid exhaustion of the limited vegetable and meat supplies in Belgium, which will involve a constant increase in the amount of food shipped into the country; the second, that the three million of French people inside the German line will be reduced to the condition of the Belgians in another thirty days and our problem will not be seven but ten million people to feed; the third is that while a considerable portion of the Belgian people have hitherto been able to pay for their food, the stoppage of the industrial

clock and the drain of indemnities is now driving them in larger and larger proportions to the wall. If all these people are to be kept alive someone has got to furnish, some way or somehow, from twelve to fifteen million dollars' worth of food every month, from April until August, when the new harvest will carry on for a little while.

Up to now we have delivered about twelve million dollars' worth of food into Belgium, and as stated above, we have in sight about another twelve million dollars. Thus we and our friends have provided by one means and another, something like twenty-four million dollars' worth of food for these people. We have now reached a point where, so far as we can see, the problem will become hopeless of solution unless the belligerent powers can come to some agreement with regard to this imprisoned population.

It is desirable that the American people should understand why both sides in this gigantic struggle have refused to accept the responsibility for the feeding of these people; for our first impulse, on being asked to undertake this work, was to refuse the task on the ground that the feeding of these people must fall on one belligerent or the other and that no call should be made on our own people. If we denude the statements of both belligerents of arguments based on initial responsibility, the following are the views generally expressed to us as the *de facto* situation:

We are informed from the German side that there is not only no provision in the Hague Convention obliging an occupying army to feed the civil population, but that, on the contrary, there is a provision that the civil population can be called upon to support the occupying army. More broadly than this, however, the Germans state that the people of Belgium have always imported their food supplies and that this population still possesses resources; and that could a gate be opened through their double wall of steel by which they could import foodstuffs and raw material and export their industrial products and thus restart credit, they could provision themselves. That in taking the harbor of Antwerp and in throwing it open to neutral trade the Germans have acquitted themselves of the responsibility, because nothing prevents the normal flow of trade except the Allied Navy. The Germans state, furthermore, that the Belgians by their continued hostility require a considerable force in occupation and, by refusal to operate public services, necessitate more soldiers to carry on these services, and that the Allies benefit therefrom and are therefore morally obliged to at least open the gate of trade to this population. They state further that while the German food supplies, with great economy, are sufficient to carry this war to successful fruition, if they have to take upon their backs an additional ten million people their stores would be seriously jeopardized, and that it is the duty of the Germans to feed their own people first; that as this war is a war to maintain German national integrity they do not propose to jeopardize the issues in such a manner.

The English and French affirm that they cannot allow free trade with Antwerp, for there can be no assurance that the enemy will not be supplied thereby; moreover, in the traditions of international law it is the duty of the occupying army to provision the civil popu-

lation, and the importation of foodstuffs into Belgium and Northern France would relieve the Germans of their moral and legal responsibilities. Broader than this, however, although the civil population alone be supplied with foodstuffs, the Germans are relieved of the drain which would otherwise have fallen upon their own stores. That in general the situation is akin to that of a siege where the succor of the population relieves the moral and physical strain on the garrison; that the ending of this war will be by economic pressure and any relaxation of this pressure assists the enemy.

We were convinced at the beginning that the fixity of opinion on both sides as to the righteousness of their respective attitudes was such that the Belgians would starve before responsibility could be settled, for the logical consummation of these views could only mean the decimation of these ten million people. During the three months that we have been at work we have listened daily to these arguments and it is certain that were it not for the stream of food poured in by this Commission this decimation would have already begun. From the beginning all belligerents acquiesced in our feeding these people, for both felt an impasse which could not otherwise be bridged. As time has gone on, the Germans have, on their side, demonstrated their desire to help by the aid they have given us in the scrupulous adherence to our undertaking that these food supplies should reach only the civil population, and in the undertaking to cease requisition of food which we must replace; and the Allies have facilitated the passage of our ships and in innumerable helpful ways eased the working of our machinery.

We have by degrees built up a confidence on both sides as to our absolute neutrality both in word and deed and as to our national capacity to carry on this work; and in consequence there is gradually growing a feeling on both sides that there possibly lies in this Commission a *via media* through which an agreement might be found for a further step. This view grows in strength as the possibility of the world's greatest tragedy looms larger and larger; but if accommodation is found it must be found quickly. We cannot wait until the end of March before we begin to charter ships and collect the food; it must be done at once if the flow is not to be interrupted.

On the English and French side there are many who say that their people should be prepared to abandon the military advantages and give way on contentions of moral and legal issue and come to the support of these people through this Commission; but they add with vigor that they cannot be expected to go so far so long as the Germans continue draining the resources of these wretched people by way of monetary levies and the continued requisition of foodstuff outside the list agreed with this Commission.

On the German side we are told that the German people have not themselves food supplies to spare, and we believe it is true. We are told that they cannot take food from their already short supplies to feed an additional ten millions of people belonging to their antagonists. They say, however, that these people must be fed and that no action of the Germans should stand in the way of the work of this

Commission; and that, although it may mean the giving up of the undoubted right of the occupying army to secure supplies either in money or in kind, the German people are great enough and humane enough to forego all these military advantages rather than that even the shadow of the responsibility for such a debacle should be cast at their door. Here is, then, a possible ground on which, on one side, the English and French should give us financial support to feed their allies and the French their own blood, and the Germans should cease to reduce, through levies and requisitions, the abilities of these imprisoned people to help themselves. If we cannot get an agreement of this sort we must struggle on as best we can with the support of the charitable world, to whom our country has given such a magnificent lead. We will feed as many people as we can. We will skimp a nation—we will even gamble with starvation—but stretch the food supplies as we may, we must say positively that it is impossible for us to save more than a modicum of this population unless the belligerent powers can be induced to come to an arrangement. If all fails, the neutral world and future generations will lay the responsibility for the decimation of these people at the proper door, and no mixture of military reason and diplomatic excuse will cloud the issue.

The magnificent generosity of the American people, which has proved neutrality no mere barren negation, will have been wasted unless each of these belligerent peoples comes to its rightful share in saving from starvation these millions of men, innocent women, and children.

We have stated our case bluntly and frankly. Our only court of appeal is American public opinion, and it is for America to say whether a crime shall be committed which will bring this generation down in infamy to posterity.

DOCUMENT NO. 133

Memorandum, by Hoover, *of a conversation in Berlin with* Dr. Wickliffe Rose, *of the Rockefeller Foundation, and* Ambassador Gerard, *on 1–2 February 1915, regarding the German attitude in the matter of requisitions and indemnities in Belgium*

Berlin, 3 February 1915

I arrived in Berlin Monday evening at about 7:30 and found Dr. Rose[17] on entering the Adlon Hotel. After dinner I discussed the situation with Dr. Rose and he told me that it was probable we could secure the German Government adherence to our work which we wanted.

On Tuesday morning I called on Mr. Gerard and explained to him our difficulty with the Allies on German requisitions and indemnities

[17] Dr. Wickliffe Rose and Mr. E. P. Bicknell, of the Rockefeller Foundation, after leaving Belgium in December 1915, had made a tour of inspection in Poland and Germany to investigate the situation of populations who had suffered in the war.

on Belgium and the necessity of coming to some settlement with the Germans in the matter. He told me that the undertaking which he had received from the Under-Secretary of State, Zimmermann, contained the reservation, of which we were aware, that the Germans would not requisition food which it was necessary for us to replace. Mr. Gerard explained to me that at the time this arrangement was settled verbally no such reservation was made, in consequence of which he telegraphed me the full German acquiescence; but that two weeks later on, having it confirmed by letter from Herr Zimmermann, he found this reservation introduced.

He was accompanied on his original visit to the Foreign office by the Netherlands and Spanish Ministers, and upon receiving the note containing the reservation, he had communicated with these two Ambassadors and they both expressed the utmost astonishment at the change which had been introduced as not having been in accordance with the verbal settlement and of course vitiating a large portion of the value of the undertaking. (The levies of all descriptions of food except bread particularly in the operation zone have confirmed the military view of this agreement, and the general outbreak of such requisition looks as if they were intending to denude the country before the question of replacement arises. The statements of various commandants—made to the local burgomasters in making such requisitions—to the effect that the Americans would feed the people as soon as the food is gone, are an indication of general knowledge of the reservation in the agreement.) Mr. Gerard expressed himself in the strongest terms in regard to the matter and stated that he felt it was a disgrace that the American public should be imposed upon to furnish food under such circumstances, and that he felt strongly that we should withdraw from the field entirely unless these wretched people were to be better protected from the military. He expressed his confidence and kind feeling toward the German civil officials, but stated that before an order could reach execution, it was obviously within the power of a hundred despots in times such as these.

DOCUMENT NO. 134

Memorandum, by HOOVER, *of a conversation with* ZIMMERMANN, *2 February 1915, with a memorandum and covering letter dated 4 February 1915, sent by Hoover, describing the problems confronting the C.R.B. in the continuation of Belgian relief*

BERLIN, 5 February 1915

On Tuesday the 2d of February, Mr. Gerard took myself, Mr. Heineman, Mr. Hulse, and Mr. Gibson to call on Mr. Zimmermann, the Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs. I presented to him the position in which the Commission found itself and the absolute necessity for assistance in working out its problems for the German Government. I reviewed the work which we had done, the circumstances under which we had begun operations, the volume of the work which we are now handling, and the necessity of government co-operation. I

proposed to him the abandonment of the contribution from Belgium to be coupled with a subsidy in gold from the English and French Governments to this Commission. Herr Zimmermann took a great interest in the whole position, and the conversation lasted over one hour. He finally expressed himself as in favor of our proposals and stated that he would assist us to the best of his ability, but remarked that men of peace have but little influence in these times. He asked to have a complete memorandum sent to him, which I agreed to prepare.

BERLIN, 4 February 1915

DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

In compliance with the wish you expressed on the second instant, when I had the honor of presenting to you my colleagues of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, I take pleasure in sending you herewith three memoranda setting forth certain matters in which the Commission is deeply concerned.

These documents are as follows:

I. A note setting out the bases of reorganized relations which the Commission for Relief in Belgium is desirous of effecting with the Imperial German Government.

II. A memorandum upon the problems and position confronting the Commission for Relief in Belgium if it is to continue provisioning the civil population.

III. For your information a copy of a memorandum furnished by the British Foreign Office embodying the Commission's understanding of the attitude of the belligerent governments toward the provisioning of Belgians.

My colleagues of the Commission will, I need hardly say, greatly appreciate any efforts you may find it possible to make to secure early and kindly consideration for the matters set forth in these documents.

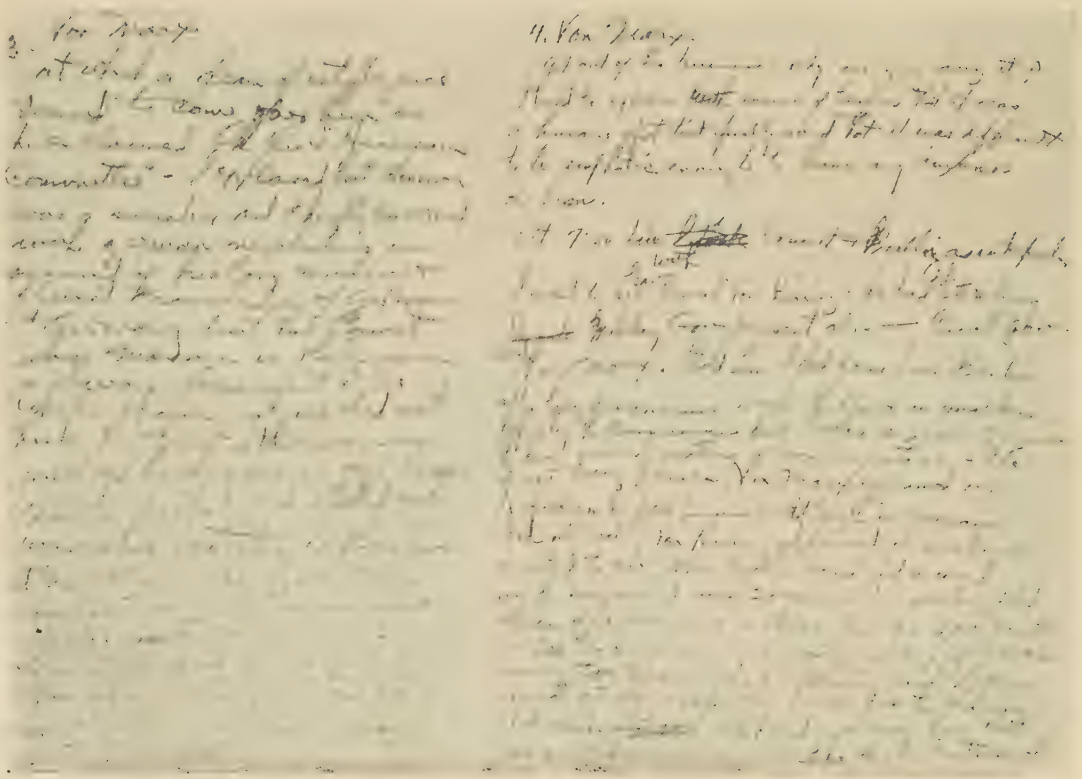
Very sincerely yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

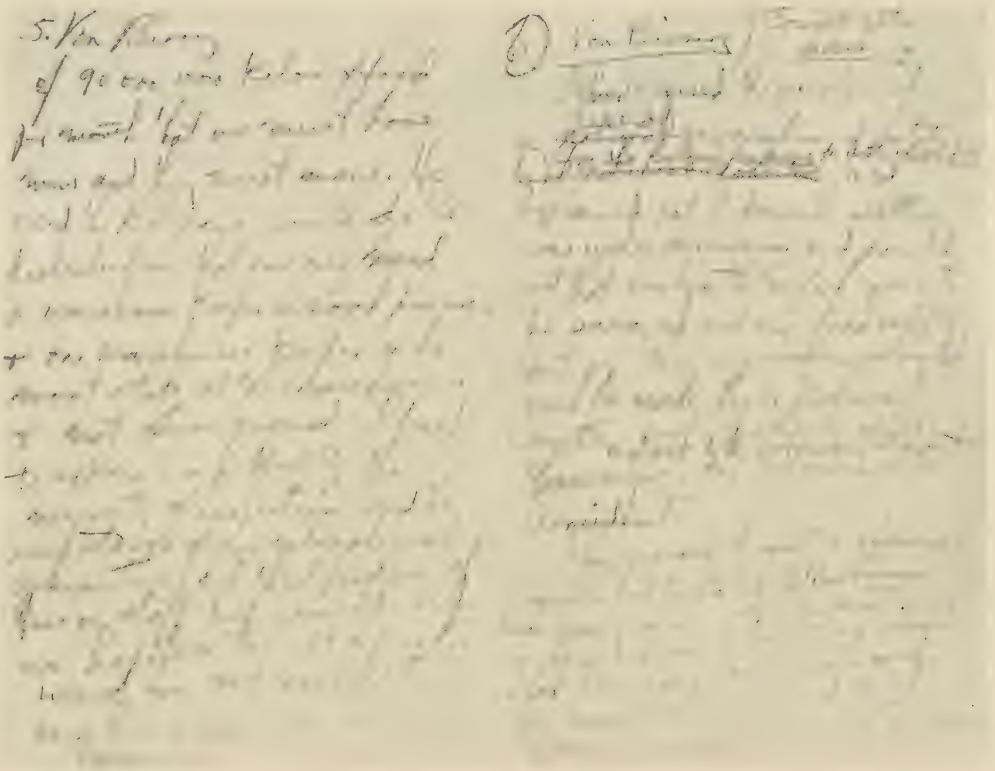
NOTE ON THE PROPOSED AGREEMENT

1. The Commission for Relief in Belgium is a purely neutral body created by the American Ambassadors and Ministers in Brussels, Berlin, and London, the Spanish Ambassador in London, and the Spanish Minister in Brussels, to give effect to the various undertakings entered into with the German and English Governments, providing for the import of foodstuffs to the civil population in Belgium. These foodstuffs are distributed by the Commission in conjunction with the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, a portion of the foodstuffs being sold to those who can afford to pay and a portion distributed free under proper restriction to the destitute.

There are at present over 1,400,000 destitute being supported by the Commission through the communes, and the entire population of 6,500,000 are dependent upon the Commission for breadstuffs, peas,



Hoover's Memoranda, 11 12 February 1915, of Conferences with German Officials in Brussels



Hoover's Memoranda, 11–12 February 1915, of Conferences with German Officials in Brussels *(see page 274)*

beans, and bacon. Up to date there have been in the main sufficient local supplies of potatoes and meat, but these are now failing. The imports of the Commission have been as follows:

November about 20,100,000 kilos costing....	4,500,000 marks
December about 51,200,000 kilos costing....	13,800,000 marks
January about 89,000,000 kilos costing....	25,700,000 marks
Total.....	44,000,000 marks

2. The monies collected in Belgium for that portion of the foodstuffs which are sold cannot be turned into gold. This money is used locally to buy potatoes, meat, etc., for the destitute, and the remainder is given to the communal authorities to enable them to pay communal salaries, school teachers, etc. The monies that are thus collected do not, therefore, assist the real problem of the Commission, that is, the finding of gold with which to purchase foodstuffs in the neutral countries.

3. The foodstuffs have hitherto been secured by gift (principally from America) and by advance from the Belgian Government, and from the Belgian banks out of the balances which they have abroad. The philanthropic sources are totally inadequate to meet this problem, and owing to the attitude recently taken by the English government, the purely financial side of the operations is about to break down.

4. If the civil population of Belgium are to be kept from starvation, and therefore if order is to be preserved in the country, the amount of imports of food must not only be maintained, but must probably be increased. While the Commission has a residue of resources to carry on the work for a short time, unless these imports are to be interrupted, it is imperative that further arrangements shall be made for finance. It requires over two months between the charter of ships and the purchase of food abroad before the food can be delivered into Belgium, and therefore, it is imperative to take immediate action if the flow of food is not to be stopped.

5. The stoppage of the industrial clock and the consequent cessation of exports from Belgium, and the continuous monetary levies by the occupying army, and the rapidly approaching exhaustion of the local supply of potatoes and meat has placed the whole problem entirely beyond the financial capacity of the Commission, unless some basis of accommodation with the belligerent governments can be provided for adequately furnishing assistance. The supplies sent into Belgium must quickly increase and if the French[18] population within the German lines are to be supported, they must be supplied with foodstuffs of great value.

6. It must be obvious that the continuous feeding of this population is of the greatest military importance to the Germans, for a

[18] It was apparent that something must be done to relieve the growing distress among the 2,000,000 people in occupied Northern France. Nevertheless, Hoover realized the uselessness of attempting to organize relief in this new area until he could secure means to handle the Belgian problem successfully. See chapter vi.

starving population on the lines of communication would be the greatest menace. The humanitarian tradition and history of the German people are, however, sufficient warrant for the complete assumption that the decimation of this imprisoned and besieged people would be most repugnant to them, and that if no other reason existed, the Germans would not, even at the cost of personal sacrifice, consent to the starvation of these people.

7. The exercise of the undoubted rights of the occupying army to provisions from the civil population was largely abandoned by the German Government early in January, when the impending exhaustion of foodstuffs became so evident. The reports, however, of isolated cases of the requisitioning of cattle, pigs, potatoes, etc., by the army since agreement was entered into, have greatly damaged the Commission's effort to raise funds, as there has been a great outcry raised that the statement by the Commission that such requisitions had ceased was untrue; and the effect is to seriously curtail the efforts of philanthropic supporters of the Commission in neutral countries. The Commission, therefore, earnestly desires that the directions as to requisitioning foodstuffs of any kind in Belgium should be made broad enough and specific enough to cover all possible eventualities as set out in the proposed memorandum of agreement.

8. Of much wider importance, however, than the above is the fact that without governmental aid from some source the efforts of the Commission must by degrees fall far behind the necessities of these people. The Commission, therefore, considered every source of supply possible and decided that under the present military situation the Germans could not be expected to furnish food supplies from their own stores. The Commission, therefore, approached the English, French, and Belgian Allies and asked for finance on the ground that this civil population was of their own blood and that the primary duty devolved upon them.

The Belgian Government made an undertaking to support the Commission financially, but beyond a small amount this undertaking was in turn dependent on the support which the Belgian Government should receive from the English and French Governments. These latter Governments have now positively refused to help on the ground that they would not provide public money for food purchases because this would amount to assisting their enemy by relaxing the economic strain which he would otherwise be under to support the Belgians himself. While these Governments do not object to other parties or neutrals supplying food, they were not themselves prepared to assume an additional burden in assisting. After repeated representations and a statement of what the Commission deemed to be the German point of view, the English Government informed the Commission that, while prepared to alter their view to some extent, they would not do so because of the continued levy of money contributions and food requisitions upon the Belgians. The English Government takes the attitude that it would be absurd for them to furnish gold from their own coffers for foodstuffs to be imported into Belgium while the Germans were requisitioning similar food, and or contributions of money from the Belgians, as the import of food to

the Belgians is in itself a benefit to the Germans, and if the English are to give way to the extent of finding the gold necessary, then the Germans should likewise meet the situation half way. The Commission replied to this by asking of the English and Allied Governments if they would be prepared to finance the Commission in case the Germans would be willing to meet half way by abandonment of requisitions of food and the money contributions on Belgium. To this the Commission was informed that these Governments would give financial support to the Commission in such an event, but not otherwise.

9. The Commission, in its deep desire to serve these wretched people, therefore respectfully submits to the German Government that its efforts must greatly diminish and ultimately fail altogether unless the Commission can receive such undertakings from the German Government. And the Commission suggests that if the German Government will abandon the collection of the monetary contributions on Belgium and the requisitioning of foodstuffs, then the Commission is in a position to impose upon the English Government the duty of finding the gold necessary to buy these foodstuffs, and the Commission has received assurances from the English and French Governments that such gold will be forthcoming.

10. The Commission has no other desire than to ameliorate the condition of this helpless people, and feels that in applying to the German Government for co-operation in the prevention of the collapse of its work, it will receive consideration commensurate with the broad grasp which the German people have demonstrated that they take of the problem growing out of this titantic struggle. The Commission is convinced that unless this plan is carried out, the German Government will have a starving population of 6,500,000 people on its hands within a few weeks.

DOCUMENT NO. 135

Memorandum, by HOOVER, *of a conversation with* DR. KARL HELFFERICH, *Imperial Finance Minister, 4 February 1915, concerning the indemnities and the financial proposals of the Minister*

BERLIN, 6 February 1915

At 6 o'clock I had a meeting, accompanied by Mr. Heineman, with the Finance Minister, Mr. Helfferich. Mr. Heineman having seen him previously, he was well informed as to our proposals. He stated at once, however, that the proposed abandonment of the contribution from Belgium was wholly and absolutely impossible. He stated that Herr Zimmermann could not have understood what we meant. He stated that some other way would have to be found to assist the Commission, and suggested that we go to Brussels and place our requirements before the Local Government, and that he would ask them to assist us in every way possible. I told him that this was a matter which concerned the Imperial Government itself, that the questions of feeding seven millions in Belgium, three millions

in France, and ten millions in Poland[19] were all wrapped up in one question, and that was the question as to the control of imported foodstuffs through neutral committees, and that I presumed these committees would have to be, from the nature of things, American, and that it was due to anybody who undertook such a labor that his requests should receive attention from the highest.

I explained the voluntary character of our effort, the philanthropic origin of our funds, the additions which we had had to these funds from Belgian sources, and the absolute vital importance to the German Government from a military point of view that we should continue our action, and stated that unless we could be properly recognized by the Government and helped in our work by them, it would ultimately dwindle down to a service totally inadequate to the millions of people.

The Minister then made a series of suggestions as to other methods. He proposed that the contribution on Belgium should be increased and that we should be handed the increased contribution. To this I replied that this would be nothing but paper and that we must have gold. He then suggested that we might have bills drawn by the people from whom we purchased foodstuffs, and have these bills accepted by the Belgian banks, and that through the friends of the German Government in New York they could arrange to have these bills discounted and even renewed. He explained to me that Mr. Warburg,[20] the head of the banking firm of Warburg and Company of Hamburg, was a brother of Mr. Warburg of Messrs. Kuhn, Loeb and Company of New York, head of the American Government National Reserve Board, and that the National Reserve Board was anxious to set up a large business in bills, diverting especially South American bills from the London to the New York market, and that Mr. Warburg in New York would be in a position to induce the various banks to discount these bills, and he stated that no doubt they would be renewed from time to time until the war was over.

I explained to him that there were two weaknesses in his proposal: The first was that I saw no reason why any Belgian bank should accept these bills, as we had no money to pay any Belgian bank; that although we sold a portion of the foodstuffs the money which we received was dissipated in caring for the destitute and in paying communal officials; and that I could see no more reason why a Belgian bank should accept such bills than any other bank in the world; the other difficulty was that the amount of such bills would run into ten millions of dollars per month and that it would go on for nine months at least. We had some argument on the question and he stuck to his point tenaciously and said we should see Mr. Warburg, with whom we had already discussed the matter. He again repeated that the idea of abandoning the contribution from Belgium was wholly impossible for three reasons: (1) The technical arrangements under which the contributions had been set up requiring the abandonment of the rights of local generals, and other inter

[19] See chapter xi.

[20] Max M. Warburg.

departmental arrangements which could not be broken down; (2) it would be equivalent to the German Government paying for the food of the Belgians; and (3) the English Government could say that it compelled the Germans to do it.

I replied that this was not my view; that the possession of the contribution placed in the hands of the Germans a club which they could use to force the English and French to pay out two million pounds per month in gold to feed the Belgians; and that all it meant to the Germans was the abandonment of forty million francs worth of doubtful paper. He suggested that we might expand the contribution, the Société Générale to discount the provincial bonds as in the old case, and to print similar currency against them, and that the Imperial Government might entertain some method of guaranteeing their exchange value and interesting their friends, Messrs. Warburg and the German agents in New York, to raise money against such guaranteed exchange.

I pointed out that sooner or later this would mean the export of gold from Germany, that in any case it means the inflation of the Société Générale currency to a disastrous point. I informed him that in any event his method was one which required the Americans to loan the money, the Belgians to repay the loan, the Germans hanging on to their indemnity from Belgium; that if I went back to England and replied to question of the English Government that the Germans had refused to relax the pressure on Belgium, the English must at once give publicity to their offer, and that I did not think any American banker would care to loan money to the Belgians under such circumstances.

We parted in order to see Mr. Warburg at the Adlon Hotel.

DOCUMENT NO. 136

Memorandum, by Hoover, *of a conversation with* Max M. Warburg, *the German banker, 4 February 1915, concerning methods of financing Belgian relief*

Berlin, 6 February 1915

At 7:30 I had a meeting with Mr. Warburg, accompanied by Mr. Heineman, at the Adlon. He informed us generally of the position as he understood it from the Minister of Finance, and we discussed the matter at some length. He agreed with us that there was no banking operation in it unless we secured a similar amount of money to the accepted bills and deposited this money somewhere. He also agreed that the amount of money involved was very much larger than he had been led to believe. He informed me of the success he had had with discounting the bills for the cotton shipments from the United States to Germany and that he believed through Kuhn, Loeb and Company in New York and the influence which they maintain he could secure the discount of a considerable amount of grain bills for our purpose, but that as there was a break in our financial chain due to the fact that we distributed all the money, it was therefore obvious that this could not be done. We discussed the project of increasing

the Société Générale's currency issue placed on an increased contribution, and in response to a remark of mine that if I were the manager of the Société Générale I would commit suicide before I would create a paper currency of what would apparently amount to nine hundred million francs secured on the assets of that bank and of the so-called provincial guarantees, Mr. Warburg remarked that he would have committed suicide some time ago if he had been the manager of the Société Générale. Mr. Warburg was very affable and sympathized with the humanitarian aspects of this matter, offering his services in any way which we would command. We asked him to see the Finance Minister and explain that the projects which he laid down were infeasible and that the short straight method was to adopt our proposal. He promised to see the Minister that evening. We reviewed the humanitarian aspects and the effect it would have on good-will toward Germany, with which he apparently acquiesced.

DOCUMENT NO. 137

Memorandum, by Hoover, *of a conversation with* Herr Ballin,[21] *5 February 1915, concerning the attitude of the German Government toward the financial proposals of the C.R.B.*

Berlin, 6 February 1915

At 10:30, accompanied by Mr. Heineman, I called on Herr Ballin at the Esplanade Hotel and spent about an hour and a half with him. I explained that I had originally made the appointment with him some two or three weeks ago with a view to discussing the transfer to our service of some of the Hamburg-American freight ships,[22] but that while the negotiation for government permission was going well, things had constantly taken a change and a great difficulty had arisen before us which had prevented any further progress in the shipping matter.

I then sketched to him briefly our history and present position, and how necessary it was that we should find some point of accommodation between the belligerent governments; that we did not expect then to make such a thing as a treaty directly concerning the Belgians, but we felt that we must get some positive concession from each side to the Commission if the Belgian people were not to starve. I restated to him the argument in the matter from the German point of view, humanitarian as well as military, and then reviewed the discussion we had had with the Finance Minister.

Mr. Ballin stated he had had some discussion already with regard to the matter and that he did not believe the Finance Minister's proposals would hold good, and that he did think the Germans were big enough to adopt our proposals. He said he would see the Finance Minister and also the Chancellor during the day and that he would support us in the matter, as he considered that the whole problem of

[21] Albert Ballin, head of the Hamburg-Amerika Line, a man of broad humanitarian interests, who during the last years of peace had worked diligently for the adjustment of Anglo-German differences.

[22] See chapter v.

these captured people was the most important problem which was before the German people at the present time; that they could not be allowed to starve, that the Germans had not the foodstuffs themselves to keep them alive, and that the Germans must go a long way in the support of such neutral agencies as could solve this problem.

After a considerable discussion of various points I shook hands on leaving, and as a parting word he stated: "You can depend on me to help with all my might."

DOCUMENT NO. 138

Memorandum, by Hoover, *of a conversation with* Dr. Melchior, *financial adviser to the Imperial Finance Minister and adviser to the M. M. Warburg Bank of Hamburg, 5 February 1915, concerning the attitude of the German Government with regard to indemnities and the alternative financial proposal of the Finance Minister*

At 3 o'clock I had a meeting with Dr. Melchior, the financial adviser to the Finance Ministry, and also adviser to Messrs. Warburg's bank at Hamburg. Mr. Melchior informed me he had discussed this question with Mr. Warburg and with the Finance Minister, and that for technical and diplomatic reasons which he enumerated in much the same terms as the Finance Minister, it was wholly impossible to abandon the contribution on Belgium. He stated, however, that the Germans would help us, and then repeated the whole of the financial proposals which had been made to us the day before by the Finance Minister. I again went over the ground showing how these were wholly and absolutely impossible from a financial point of view; that there was no banking operation possible such as he fancied could be built up. He referred two or three times to Mr. Warburg of Hamburg, and to Mr. Warburg's influence with the New York bankers and with the National Reserve Board in the placing of commercial bills; and it became obvious to me that they were anxious to take advantage of this influential relation in placing some kind of commercial paper as a solution to this problem.

After discussing the weaknesses of the Finance Minister's project, Dr. Melchior made a suggested alteration in that he proposed to follow the system of the present contribution; that the provinces should issue a bond for monies with which to buy food, to be called Relief Bonds; that the Société Générale should discount these bonds, should be authorized to issue an equivalent amount in currency, or that the Reichsbank should rediscount the bonds from the Société Générale or accept the currency; and that with the guarantee of the Reichsbank commercial bills for the foodstuffs could be placed initially in New York and constantly renewed until after the war.

I pointed out that it seemed to me they all went wrong over the question of quantities; that inasmuch as all of the money which we received in Belgium from the sale of foodstuffs is bound to melt away in the various services, the problem became one of finding the total cost of all food imported into Belgium and Northern France; that this would turn out to be a minimum of forty million marks per

month, and that it must go on for say twelve months, which meant the finding of a hundred million dollars; that it was wholly and absolutely impossible to conceive that such a sum could be built up on commercial bills; that the capacity of the New York market was certainly not over ten or twelve million dollars for this purpose.

I went very fully into the sentimental phases of the situation and pointed out that the whole effect of this contribution levied on Belgium in the eyes of the American public had been most disastrous from every German point of view; that here was our Commission making frantic appeals to the American people for money and food with which to save the Belgians from starvation, and coincidently with these appeals in everyone's ears came the news of the levy of forty million francs per month; that the general expression in America was: "What is the use of pouring money and food into Belgium in order to enable the German Army to extract the last drop of blood from these people?" and that this action was drying up the wells of philanthropy at their sources. I explained to him that the Germans did not seem to be able to understand that the sentiment in the United States was not pro-English, but was pro-Belgian, and that so long as the German people continued to put themselves in the wrong with regard to Belgium, it was absolutely hopeless for them to dream of securing American sentiment. If they valued American good feeling, the maintenance of press bureaus in the United States, the expenditure of monies and effort in an endeavor to build it up, was a hopeless waste so long as the telegraph wires carried news daily and weekly of the forced extraction of blood from the Belgians. In any event Dr. Melchior did not seem particularly cordial upon our point. He said he would discuss the matter at further length and give it more consideration. In any event they wanted no transactions with England directly or indirectly. I pointed out that there must be transactions with England, as the food must pass English waters and English ships were used; and that if they wanted the Belgians fed, any proposition put up would have to have the approval of the English; and that it was useless to cook up schemes which were impossible for me to carry with the English; that, like it or not, if they wanted the service of this Commission or any other American body the Commission was going to be consulted in any project and the approval of every interested party secured, or we would withdraw and leave these 10,000,000 people to the Germans.

DOCUMENT NO. 139

Memorandum, by Hoover, *of a conversation by* Gerard *and himself with* von Jagow, *6 February 1915, respecting indemnities, other problems of relief, and the attitude of public opinion*

Berlin, 7 February 1915

At 4:30 I accompanied Mr. Gerard to call upon Herr von Jagow, Minister of Foreign Affairs. He told me he had had some discussion with Mr. Zimmermann, and also with the Chancellor and with Mr. Helfferich, and that Dr. Helfferich was formulating a plan to solve

our difficulties. He stated that of course the monthly indemnity on Belgium could not be abandoned, but the matter could be solved in another manner, and stated that we had better continue our negotiations which we were carrying on with Dr. Helfferich. I stated that the proposals outlined by Dr. Helfferich were not agreeable to us, and that I felt that this matter did not lie entirely in the Finance Department, but lay largely in the Foreign Office, because it was a matter which concerned all Germany in relations and its good reputation abroad; that it seemed to me a great deal of a task to continue to feed the Belgians, no matter from what source money might be obtained, so long as the German Government continued to extract from these people a similar amount of money. I told him that as apparently the indemnity was only laid on Belgium after we had become well established in our work, I felt sometimes that we had been the cause of this terrible infliction, because if the people of Belgium had been as desperate as the people in Poland for want of food, it is impossible that the fine would ever have been imposed. He replied that the people of Belgium had enormous resources, and that forty million francs a month was much less than they could really afford to pay; that this was collected merely to support the occupying army under the provisions of the Hague Convention and that none of the money was sent to Germany; and he again affirmed that we should continue our negotiations with Dr. Helfferich, who, he stated, would help us in every possible way, as would the other members of the Government.

I then took up with him the question of passes for the people employed on our work;[23] that it was almost impossible for us to obtain the passes which we needed; that there were great delays; and that the passes very often proved inadequate for the purpose for which they were issued; that we were made to feel most of the time that a favor was being conferred upon us that we were allowed to work in Belgium; and that I did think it was most necessary that the whole of this attitude and method should be revised. I suggested that in the future passes should only be issued on a request signed by Mr. Whitlock or the Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy, but that a pass should be issued instantly upon sending in such a request; that practically I wanted Mr. Whitlock given the right to issue passes himself for this work.

I then took up the question of our steamers coming up the Channel after the 18th February, the presumable date of the submarine blockade.[24] I pointed out that under the English regulations and the conditions of their charters, it was wholly impossible for these ships to go to Rotterdam by way of North Scotland. After some discussion the Minister promised to have orders issued of the most scrupulous care of our steamers.

I then returned to the discussion of the indemnity question, stating to the Minister that there was one phase of this whole question which Germans obstinately ignored: that the Germans were

[23] See chapter ii.

[24] See chapter v.

obviously anxious to win the good feeling of the American people; that they were most severe in their denunciation of our lack of neutrality, and yet they did not take the most essential precautions to win and hold the esteem of the American people; and that if they held at least one-half of the American sentiment, they could be assured of impartiality in national conduct and therefore it was worth while to make some effort. I pointed out to him that America was not nascently pro-British, while at the present time 70 per cent of the American people were extremely pro-English; that this sentiment did not arise out of any love of England, but arose out of the fact that the Americans were pro-Belgian, and that it was entirely out of their views as to the treatment of Belgium by the Germans and their belief that the English were fighting the Belgian cause which led their feelings to lean so predominantly toward the English; and that I was absolutely satisfied that in order to win American opinion Germany must mend her methods toward Belgium; that if Germany today would take a generous and grand view and would release the Belgians from their monthly indemnity, I believed it would do more to win American opinion than any other act possible; that therefore this whole problem became one of the Foreign Office, whose duty it is to guard foreign opinion and relations; and that I hoped he would consider the thing as a problem apart from the financial schemes of Dr. Helfferich. Those schemes might be of able financial character but they implied that Americans supply the money and that Belgians ultimately repay it; and while it reflected credit on the skill of the Finance Ministry, it did not reflect any particular credit or give cause for gratitude toward Germany.

Mr. Gerard pointed out that he himself had been the vehicle through which the Germans had communicated their offers to the Belgians, after the taking of Liège, offering the Belgians not only guarantees as to their national integrity, but also large indemnities; and that therefore it was not much of a step to say now that when the Belgians are completely conquered they should at least be assured their national integrity, even though they do not receive any indemnities, and that they should be free from themselves paying indemnities to the Germans.

He also reminded the Minister of the Chancellor's speech on the 4th August, in which assurances were given with regard to Belgium which had not yet been withdrawn.

DOCUMENT NO. 140

Memorandum, by Hoover, *of a conversation by* Gerard *and himself with* Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, Imperial Chancellor, *7 February 1915, with regard to indemnities, finance, and other problems of relief*

Berlin, 7 February 1915

At 6 o'clock I accompanied Mr. Gerard to a meeting with the Imperial Chancellor, His Excellency von Bethmann-Hollweg. Mr. Gerard presented to him the essential facts with regard to our po-

sition: that the question of the feeding of the Belgians would soon get beyond the resources which we could command by philanthropy or from the assistance of the Belgian Government; that if we were to feed the people of Northern France as well as the Belgians, we should require 40 or 50 million marks per month; and that the Allied Governments had refused to come to our assistance so long as the Germans continued their monetary levies on Belgium. The Chancellor stated at once with emphasis that the Germans would never give up this contribution, reiterating that it was absolutely impossible; that, on the other hand, they recognized the very necessary character of the work and were prepared to find some other method of financial assistance; that Germany wanted no help from the Allies in anything. That in the face of the world and of German public opinion they could not for one moment retreat from an act which they had taken under the full rights confirmed by the Hague Convention. He stated that financial proposals were being drawn up by Mr. Helfferich in consultation with the financial members of the German Civil Government in Belgium and that a method would be worked out which would make our path easy from a financial point of view. I pointed out that we had had discussions with Mr. Helfferich and that all of his proposals revolved around the Belgians undertaking to pay for the foodstuffs ultimately, and that in the meantime the American public or American bankers should furnish the money; and that the first part of the proposal was a matter with which I had nothing to do and must be settled with the Belgians, but I could state at once with regard to the second part of the proposal, that is, the finding of the necessary money in America, that this would meet with the strongest opposition. That I had no doubt that upon my arrival in London the English Government would immediately demand to know whether the Germans had accepted our proposal, and that I would be compelled to inform them that it had not been accepted. Upon this the English would announce to the world that they had offered to pay for the feeding of the Belgians themselves if the Germans would withdraw their forced contributions from Belgium, and that I did not believe that in the face of such an announcement the Americans would be disposed to at all facilitate the matter. Moreover, it might release the English from all feeling of responsibility in the matter. That I felt strongly that this was a matter in which both Governments must meet half way through this Commission. He stated that he could have no negotiations with the English in any shape or form, to which I replied that we were not proposing any such negotiations but merely that each Government should assent to an arrangement with the Commission. Mr. Gerard pointed out that the Commission was absolutely the only way through which the Belgians could be kept from starvation, and that in keeping them from starvation the greatest possible military service was being done to the Germans. The Chancellor replied again that it was utterly impossible that they should give up the contribution and that he could not discuss the matter on this footing; and again affirmed strongly that German public opinion would not stand for it. Mr. Gerard pointed out that he had discussed the matter with the editor of one

of the most prominent German papers, who had told him that he thought it was the proper course to take; and Mr. Gerard suggested that if His Excellency would acquiesce, he, Mr. Gerard would call in a lot of editors and lay the proposal before them and endeavor to formulate public opinion. The Chancellor said this did not suit the occasion, and stated that Germany was fighting with her back to the wall, in a situation for which he could not find an English word to fully express himself—that the word "serious" was not at all adequate as a description of the position in which Germany lay at the present moment. He stated that all Germans were grateful to the Commission for the work they were carrying on, and he would pledge himself to support the Commission in every way; but he could not entertain the proposals which had been made, and begged the Ambassador not to press the point. I stated to him that in pressing this point we were pressing a point which we felt sure was one which gave the Germans a unique opportunity to demonstrate to the world their desire to be fair and generous to the Belgians, and, disregarding all that had happened, the Germans had not turned from the view which they had held from the beginning with regard to Belgium. Mr. Gerard pointed out that the Germans had consistently taken the attitude that they were not conquering Belgium, but had merely entered it as a military necessity, and that it would only be consistent with such an attitude if they did not exercise the rights of conquerors in levying the cost of occupation upon these people. I pointed out it should be the desire of every German to secure the favorable opinion of the United States toward the Germans, and that the first and primary thing necessary to obtain such good opinion was by showing the generous attitude toward Belgium. He stated that American opinion was apparently of little value, as the Americans were supplying arms to the Allies and would probably continue to do so, and that in so doing they were prolonging the war. To this Mr. Gerard replied that the position was akin to two people playing chess, where one, which he might call the Germans, stopped in the middle of the game and asked to have the whole rules of the game altered; that the rules of this game had been set down and practiced by every nation for years, and that if the rules were to be changed it could not be done in the middle of the game.

I told His Excellency that there was one other line of action which I thought that the Germans could take with regard to Belgium, which I thought would be most helpful. That it was vital that industry[25] should be re-established in Belgium as far as it was possible, but that before any such industry revival could take place the Belgians must have a greater freedom of movement, and told him that I sincerely hoped that he would reconsider the present attitude toward the better class of Belgians and see if they could find some method by which these better classes could be allowed to move around the country with greater facility, as it was hopeless to get industry re-established unless this was done. I told him that not only myself but all of my colleagues in the work had been on the most intimate terms

[25] See chapter ix.

with thousands of Belgians and that I could give him my word of honor that neither myself nor they, as far as I could learn, had ever had any suggestions of conspiracy and rebellion since we undertook this work; and that I felt the Germans were perfectly safe in allowing twenty or thirty thousand Belgians of the more important order to have complete freedom of movement within the Occupation Zone. He said, "I wonder if this is really the case"; and stated that he would have the matter looked into and see what could be done.

Mr. Gerard again returned to the question of the indemnity and pressed the point vigorously that the Germans could well afford to, and that it was positively in their interest that they should give way. To this the Chancellor said that it is finally, and once for all, absolutely impossible. I then stated to him that no matter what proposals were brought forward, I hoped that he would bear in mind at all times that these proposals would have to be agreeable to the English, otherwise we could not introduce one pound of foodstuff into Belgium; that the English were in no wise convinced that the work we were carrying on was necessary, and that they certainly considered it was not in the interest of the Allies; and that our whole operations hung on a slender thread of sentiment, a large measure of which toward the Belgians existed in England, but that a breath could blow away this sentiment and the Germans would be faced with ten million starving people on their hands. Mr. Gerard pointed out that the same situation existed in Poland[26] and that if they were to obtain the establishment of the same system of food introduction, it would entail the satisfaction of the neutral world with the other belligerents over Belgium. The Chancellor replied that they recognized these points and that they would take them into consideration in the proposals which he hoped they would be able to make; and he stated that the Commission need have no fear but that a solution would be found for other monetary necessities, but that it could not be the solution which the Commission had proposed.

DOCUMENT NO. 141

Memorandum, by HOOVER, *of a conversation by* HEINEMAN *and himself with* DR. SCHACHT, *head of the German Finance Department in Belgium, and* HERR KAUFMANN, *of the German Civil Government in Brussels, 8 February 1915, with respect to the financial proposals of German officials*

BERLIN, 8 February 1915

I had lunch with Dr. Schacht and Herr Kaufmann of the German Civil Government in Brussels, together with Mr. Heineman. During the course of the lunch I mentioned that I had had a meeting with the Chancellor and that he had stated that a solution would be found by which the Commission would be financed and that I had represented to him that any solution found must be one which took into

[26] See chapter xi.

account the susceptibilities of all of the parties concerned and that he assured me this would be done. Dr. Schacht informed me it was a great mistake on our part to have asked to have the contribution removed, stating that it put us in a bad light. To this I replied that it mattered nothing to us as to the color of the lights when we were performing a just and righteous mission; that I considered, and the whole world would yet consider, that the continued attitude of the Germans toward Belgium was an undoubted blot on their whole national career, and that it was only the lack of imagination that did not lead them to see that an entire change of attitude toward Belgium would produce for them the friendship of the world, now that the English were getting mixed up with neutral shipping in a way which aggravated neutrals. He told me that he was going to have a conference with the principal officials in the Finance Ministry and that they would make out some plan of financing the Commission. I told him that he must understand now that I left it to him to keep his colleagues in line with certain definite principles as to any plans which they had to bring forward; that, in the first instance, they could not put forward any plan which did not take into account the susceptibilities of the Belgians; in the second instance, the plan had to have the approval of the Commission for the Relief in Belgium or they could never carry it into execution; and, in the third instance, the Commission would have to get at least a negative approval of the plan by the Allied Governments or the Commission could not carry on its work. Further, it was wholly useless to formulate plans designed to secure political prestige for Germany alone, and, throughout, any such plans would have to be of absolutely neutral character. Dr. Schacht agreed with this and said that his own view was the adoption of the modification I had suggested the day before: that it should be proposed to the Comité National that the provinces should issue relief bonds; that a general debenture should be superimposed over the top of these collective provincial bonds; that this debenture should be guaranteed unqualifiedly by the Imperial German Government, and that if the Commission could obtain the guarantee of the Belgian Government at the Havre that this would put the whole character of the transaction out of the realm of international friction; that these debentures under these circumstances should be subscribed by the wealthy Belgians abroad; that it ought to be possible to place them in the United States and even England. I told him that if this were adopted it would be necessary for the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium to make the issue—that the issue could not be made under any government auspices whatever. I told him that I intended to leave for Brussels that night and would therefore be unable to attend the conference with the Minister of Finance on Tuesday. He asked me to remain, as he considered it important that we should have an all-round discussion. I told him that I felt very diffident about discussing anything which concerned the imposing of monetary obligations upon the Belgians; that I had no right to discuss any such projects; and that the only people who could discuss these things were the Belgians themselves; that so long

as my Commission was occupied in endeavoring to relieve the Belgians of obligations, I could express myself with freedom and undoubtedly with the approval of all Belgians; but when it came to imposing further financial obligations upon them, I felt that I would rather the Minister would formulate his proposals and lay them directly before Mr. Francqui.

DOCUMENT NO. 142

Memorandum, by HOOVER, *of a conversation with* DR. SCHACHT *and* HERR VON LUMM, *Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Reichsbank, 9 February 1915, concerning methods of financing relief by means of a Belgian loan, guaranteed by Germany*

BERLIN, 9 February 1915

I had a meeting at the Reichsbank at twelve o'clock and there were present Dr. Schacht, Mr. von Lumm, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Reichsbank, and Mr. Heineman.

The meeting was called to consider the financial proposals put forward by the Finance Minister, those put forward by Dr. Schacht and others. I explained that I did not wish it to be understood that I was representing the Belgians in this matter and that as I supposed their proposals would revolve around facilitating the borrowing of money by the Belgians with which to buy foodstuffs, they must bear in mind that primarily this was a matter between themselves and the Belgians; secondarily, however, as they expected to borrow the money from American agencies, I would be glad enough to inform them of such conditions as must necessarily surround any attempt on the part of the Belgians to borrow money in America, either with or without German assistance; that they must bear in mind that the American Government had practically prohibited the making of loans to any of the belligerent governments, and that therefore this loan would have to be neutral. It could only be made neutral by virtue of being guaranteed on both sides. Furthermore, the susceptibilities of the Belgian people and the susceptibilities of the English must be taken into account, as well as the Germans; that no loan could be issued unless there was a firm agreement that the objects of the loan should be solely for the support of the civilian population; that there would be no requisitioning of foodstuffs in Belgium so long as the loan was unpaid; and, on the other side, the English would have to agree to give facilities for the engagement and passage of the ships.

The conversation lasted a long time, chiefly in German, and the Chairman of the Reichsbank seemed initially much opposed to the idea; but after infinite discourse they seemed all agreed on the proposals as above laid down, that is, that if the Belgians wished to borrow fifty million dollars in America, the German Government would unqualifiedly guarantee the loan; that the Belgian Government at the Havre should be asked to guarantee the loan; that an agreement should be entered into by which the Germans undertook that there would be no food requisitions in Belgium at any time during the

currency of the loan; that the proceeds either in money or food should be entirely for the civilian population, and that the English should undertake to place no obstacles in the moving of ships for this purpose; and they undertook to recommend this procedure at the Cabinet meeting which they were to attend at six o'clock this evening.

3. *Allied Decision to Subsidize Relief. February 1915*

On his way back to London Hoover had many conferences in Brussels with members of the Commission and the Comité National, and with Governor-General von Bissing. He discussed with Francqui the financial situation, and went over with him a plan of floating a relief loan in America to be launched should the Allied Governments refuse to subsidize the Commission. In an interview with the Governor-General, Hoover attempted to settle various matters which were giving trouble, such as passes for the delegates of the Commission.[27] As far as guarantees were concerned, von Bissing assured Hoover that the General Government would faithfully adhere to all the engagements which they had undertaken. While Hoover returned to London without the full measure of concessions that he had asked, he had yet secured from the highest German authority a clear and definite confirmation of the various guarantees already given and had succeeded in getting assurances which, in the last resort, might at least prolong the feeding of Belgium.

It was a week after Hoover's return before Sir Edward Grey issued his statement that, since the Germans "refused to consider the cessation of their pecuniary exactions" in Belgium, his Government must decline to grant a *direct* subvention to the Commission. In the meantime, Lloyd George, who had been won over to the support of the relief during the earlier exchange negotiations, placed Hoover's arguments before the Cabinet. The whole-hearted support of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and other ministerial friends of the Commission's work carried the day. It was decided to recommend to the French Government a budgetary allowance for the Belgian Government which included £1,000,000 per month for "Mr. Hoover's fund." This did not constitute a *direct* subvention to the relief, but, as far as the C.R.B. was concerned, it amounted to the same thing.

[27] See chapter ii.

DOCUMENT NO. 143

Letter, FRANCQUI TO HOOVER, *regarding the difficulties of the German proposals for financing relief*

BRUSSELS, 16 February 1915

MY DEAR HOOVER:

It was only today that I had occasion to meet Dr. Schacht, who was attended by Messrs. Kaufmann and Somary. Mr. von Lumm was absent. The conversation was very indefinite, that is to say, nothing precise resulted from it. We talked about conversations which you had had with various German people, of the situation of the Treasury, of our Committee, etc.

I did not fail to lay stress upon the very great difficulties which we were about to encounter if means were not found for us to procure the necessary resources to meet the alimentary needs of the Belgian population. We successively considered the opening of credits with the Belgian banks, which should be represented by promises to pay, backed by German banks established in New York; then also an interior loan which should be guaranteed by one institution or another; and finally came to the last scheme which you discussed at the time of your visit to Germany, to wit, the constitution of a special body which should issue bonds guaranteed by the Belgian Government as well as by the Belgian provinces, to be duly authorized to that end by the German authorities.

I also brought to the attention of these gentlemen the fact that if this last scheme was to be carried out, it was indispensable that we should be authorized to inscribe upon the bonds issued that the German Government formally undertakes, until such bonds are completely redeemed, not to requisition any alimentary commodity, whether derived from cultivation in Belgium or from importations carried out under the auspices of the C.R.B.

These gentlemen asked me why I laid stress upon this point, as they could not see any reason why such a declaration should appear upon the bonds. I immediately replied that it was indispensable that we should be able to inform definitely the persons to whom we might appeal as to the maximum amount of the needs of our Comité for each month; and that merely for the cereals, beans, peas, etc., imported, this maximum would attain a monthly sum of Frs. 40,000,000. I added that, if a formal declaration on the lines indicated above was not made by the German Government, it would be impossible for us to fix the said maximum, seeing that by requisitioning in Belgium all the cattle, all commodities other than those necessary to the making of bread, as well as all harvests garnered in the month of August next, this maximum might one day attain 80 or 90 million francs per month.

One of these gentlemen immediately understood me, and it was finally decided that the matter should be referred to Berlin, with the certainty of obtaining an authorization to give such an undertaking.

Subsequently these gentlemen told me that they believed it advisable, before commencing the execution of a program like that

mentioned above, that a new endeavor should be made with the Belgian and English Governments, with a view to obtaining the financial co-operation necessary to the smooth running of our business. They insisted that negotiations should be undertaken in this direction, at the same time asking me to go and see you in a fortnight's time so that we might together go to Havre to make a last effort. They added that, with a view to not annoying Havre, it was perhaps advisable that you should not tell anybody of the plan which had been put forward. They advised me to telegraph you in this sense and I thought it well to comply with this desire. I therefore cabled you as follows through our Rotterdam office: "Think indispensable tell nobody of our idea issue bonds for Relief Commission until advised by us." As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, my conversation with Dr. Schacht was of a most indefinite nature. They seemed to have no precise instructions, although each one was anxious as to the situation which would be brought about if we did not succeed in procuring the necessary resources.

We separated after promising to meet again in a fortnight as soon as an answer had been received from Berlin to the question which I laid down regarding the undertaking to be taken by the German Government not to requisition any further commodities whatsoever until the complete reimbursement of the loan we were to eventually float abroad.

I should be greatly obliged if you would ask (or cause to be asked by one of our friends) these gentlemen at Havre what they consider it advisable for us to do; and after having received their opinion, please let me know your opinion, so that I may act here in accordance with it.

After having received a reply from Havre, and if you consider there is any urgency, you might telegraph me what you require.

Your very devoted

(Signed) EMILE FRANCQUI

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 144

Letter, GREY TO HOOVER, *reviewing the negotiations with the Germans and stating that as a result of the German position the plan of a direct subvention from the British Government must remain in abeyance*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
22 February 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Your return from Germany, and the information you have given me as to the result of your journey, afford me an opportunity to sum up the negotiations which have passed between the Commission for Relief in Belgium and His Majesty's Government, in reply to the various letters you have written me.

When the work of the Commission was originally set on foot through the efforts of the United States and Spanish Ambassadors in London on behalf of the Belgian Government, His Majesty's Government agreed that all the food supplied from neutral countries through the Commission should pass into Belgium without interruption, for distribution to the Belgian people under the guarantees given by the German Government to the Commission. His Majesty's Government also contributed £100,000 to the funds of the Commission and this sum has been supplemented by grants in money and kind from Canada, Australia, New Zealand. We have also been able to extend facilities which ensured your shipping reaching Rotterdam, and in certain instances to relax in your favour our prohibitions affecting exports of food and transfers of money. Military considerations might be held to render such action on our part inadvisable, but it appeared to us necessary in the circumstances to disregard such considerations.

You represented to us, however, that such grants were quite inadequate to your needs, since your expenditure on foodstuffs, distributed in pure charity alone, amounted to between £400,000 and £500,000 monthly. You therefore asked for a monthly subvention from His Majesty's Government to supplement the very generous private contributions which you were receiving from the American public.

We did not see our way to accede to your request, and indeed for some time we regarded the whole project of the distribution of food in Belgium with some doubt, in view of the action of the German authorities. While respecting the food actually imported by you, they did not until December accede to your representations regarding the cessation of requisitions for the use of the German army of the supplies of native food remaining available for the civil population of Belgium; and they even carried away cattle and cereals from Belgium into Germany itself. They also levied large monetary contributions upon the cities and communes in Belgium, and these exactions have now culminated in the levy of a sum of 40,000,000 francs a month from the whole country. It was evident that if, under such conditions, the British Government undertook through your Commission to supply money or food to the Belgian population, the only result would be an equivalent diminution of the food and supplies already there. The British Government, in fact, would have been facilitating the feeding, and paying for the maintenance, of the German army. Under these conditions, therefore, it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to make a direct grant to the Commission.

Eventually, however, His Majesty's Government recognised that the work of the Commission was directed on sound lines to supply the urgent needs of the Belgian people, and had the less doubt on this point in view of the additional guarantees obtained by you in December from the German Government that at least all kinds of foodstuffs which would need to be replaced by the Commission should be free from all requisition, and in view of the assurances you were able to give His Majesty's Government that the foodstuffs imported by you had not been interfered with by the German troops. Further, I was able to inform you last month that His Majesty's Government would grant the Commission a monthly subvention to enable it to carry on

its work, on condition that the German Government would undertake to cease all requisitions of food of any kind, and all levies and contributions of any kind whatever in Belgium, with the exception, of course, of such taxation of the people as is admitted under the Hague Convention.

At your request, this offer was not made public at the time, but you were authorised to inform the German Government of it. I now understand that during your recent visit to Berlin you informed the German Government of the exact position of affairs but that, while they consented to stop all requisitions of food in the Zone of Occupation east of Ghent, they refused to consider the cessation of their pecuniary exactions, and especially the levy of 40,000,000 francs a month, which they apparently intend to continue.

Solely on account of this attitude on the part of the German Government, the proposed arrangement between His Majesty's Government and the Commission must be regarded as having broken down. We shall of course maintain our general favourable attitude towards your work, and our offer of financial support will remain open in the event of the German Government receding from their present position in regard to their levies in Belgium, but for the moment the idea of a direct subvention out of Government funds toward the charitable work of the Commission must remain in abeyance.

I cannot conclude this letter without expressing our appreciation of the generosity of the American people and the admirable organisation established by the Commission, which have alone made this work possible. The people of this country will, I am sure, recognise in your work a prominent example of the qualities of efficiency and public spirit which distinguish the many neutral services rendered by Americans in Europe at the present time.

Yours very truly

(Signed) E. GREY

DOCUMENT NO. 145

Memorandum, by HOOVER, *of a conversation with* LLOYD GEORGE *and* VAN DE VYVERE *concerning the financial situation of Belgian relief and the present state of negotiations*

LONDON, 17 February 1915

I received notice to call upon Mr. Lloyd George at 3:30 and found there Mr. Van de Vyvere, the Belgian Minister of Finance, and Count de Lalaing, the Belgian Ambassador.

Mr. Lloyd George stated that there would be a cabinet meeting on Thursday at twelve o'clock, in which the question of feeding the Belgians would come up for general review. He stated that Messrs. Churchill and Kitchener were very much opposed, on military grounds, to a continuance of our work; that his own views had been greatly altered by his discussions and correspondence with me, and

that he found himself able to support us unqualifiedly in our humanitarian task. He asked me how much foodstuff had been subscribed from America. I told him out of approximately £5,000,000 worth of food delivered and in transit, £1,000,000, was composed of American gifts; that we had had gifts from other quarters, British Colonies, etc. He asked how much money we had had from the British Government up to date, and I told him £100,000; and Mr. Van de Vyvere explained that we had £2,000,000 from him. He reviewed some arrangements with the Belgians, mentioning £300,000 in payment of Belgian railway workmen. I told him I knew nothing about the transaction at all; that from my point of view I received a million pounds a month from the Belgians to purchase food with and transmit it to Belgium, and to account therefor, and that as to what internal arrangements were made I was not interested so long as I got the million pounds a month; and that I would, in fact, prefer to have as little to do with such arrangements as possible; that my whole approach to the problem was from a humanitarian point of view, and that I must argue the whole matter on that footing. Mr. Lloyd George asked me to review to him—in order to refresh his mind—some arguments which I had placed before him previously, as he wished to repeat them to his colleagues. He asked that I give him a memorandum, and asked how quickly I could get it; to which I replied that I could have it ready at half-past six. He stated that I should make it as vigorous and as strong as possible, and to approach the subject as though our work were about to be suppressed, and to put any arguments in which would meet such a proposal. I then returned to the office and we prepared the following memorandum:

DOCUMENT NO. 146

Memorandum, Hoover to Lloyd George, *reviewing financial and other aspects of relief, and urging the necessity of British support*

London, 17 February 1915

The Right Hon. David Lloyd George
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Dear Sir:

As to your request that I should send you a memorandum on the matters affecting the provisioning of the civil population of Belgium.

1. Except for the breadstuffs imported by this Commission there is not one ounce of bread in Belgium today. The 7,000,000 people there are at present receiving the small allowance of 250 grams of flour per diem per capita, necessitating the importing of approximately between 65,000 and 70,000 tons of wheat per month. In addition to this the native supplies of potatoes and meat are showing signs of rapid exhaustion, and measures must be taken to supplement the bread supply which we are now providing. Of the 7,000,000 population about 1,500,000 are at present entirely destitute and are

being wholly supported by this Commission, and before the next harvest over 2,500,000 people will have to be supported. Foodstuffs are sold to those who can still pay, and payment is received in Belgian paper money, that being the only currency in the country. These foodstuffs are sold at a small profit in order to compel the more well-to-do population to assist in the support of the destitute. The moneys received from these sales are used to purchase supplementary food in the shape of potatoes and soup-materials for the destitute. The cost of feeding the destitute averages about 12 francs per capita per month, and therefore now aggregates between £500,000 and £600,000 per month. If it were possible to secure exchange in Belgium for the paper which we receive, our budget would balance except for the above expenditure on benevolent account. On the other hand, the export of this paper money to London is useless and infeasible, and hitherto it has been distributed to the communes to pay communal salaries and other services, and the equivalent amounts have been supplied by the Belgian Government on this side. One may, however, entirely disregard these internal sales operations, as they do not represent the gold necessary to purchase foodstuffs, which will now be a rising amount of from £1,000,000 to £1,500,000 per month.

2. Under the agreements entered into between this Commission and the German Government there has never been any interference with the foodstuffs introduced by us. We can account to the satisfaction of any auditor for every sack of wheat from the time it leaves Rotterdam until it reaches the Belgian civil consumer, and in fact so rigorous has been our attitude on this matter that the Germans have acceded to our demand for a restitution to us from military stores for amounts equivalent to those consumed by billeted troops and by officers and men eating in public restaurants. Early in our work we undertook negotiations with the Germans to bring to an end the requisitioning of native foodstuffs, and at the end of December we reached an agreement with regard to the Occupation Zone (which comprises the most of Belgium), and since that date there have been no requisitions of native food whatever in that zone with the exceptions of one or two minor instances which were corrected upon our complaint. During my recent visit to Berlin I made arrangements for the extension of this agreement to cover, so far as practicable from a military point of view, the "operation" zone, which comprises the country westward of Ghent; and in any event, we are sending but little foodstuffs into that territory.

3. The question as to whether the Germans would themselves out of their own provisions feed the people of Belgium is one upon which I am, from the result of my observations and discussions during my recent visit to Berlin, perfectly clear and confirmed. I attach hereto a memorandum expressing the German official view of this question. I put it forward without comment as to its proper character but only as showing the feeling which permeates the entire German official mind on this question; and with this, to them, moral justification of their attitude, it seems to me hopeless to expect this service.

Of more importance than this, however, is the fact that Germany is already short of food supplies and the Germans high and low

emphatically state that they will not starve their own people in order to feed the enemy population.

4. I cannot too strongly affirm that unless foodstuffs are introduced into Belgium from foreign sources, the decimation of this population will begin within thirty days. Already the population is restive enough and is being held in check by the influence of the communal authorities and members of these committees through their insistence that the food supply will stop instantly there is any disorder in the country. Futile as it might be, such disorder will certainly arise and long before a famine has decimated the people of Belgium; and the women and children will have been slaughtered as the result of the futile outbreaks of violence.

5. The British people entered upon this the greatest war of their history for the sole purpose of maintaining the Belgian people and their national integrity. It would be a cynical thing if the land of Belgium were discovered at the completion of this task to be but an empty husk! Compared to the cost, either from a military or a financial point of view, it is not worth taking the risk that this should happen.

This cost from a military point of view can be measured in the days by which this war will be extended, because the monetary outlay of supplying food to these people is negligible beside the vast sums otherwise involved; the extension of the war through the importation from abroad to the Belgian civil population of 70,000 to 80,000 tons of breadstuff per month can amount to a lengthening of this conflict but by a few days, even assuming that the Germans would supply this bread. From an economic point of view the war will be won not by compelling the Germans to give up 6 per cent of their breadstuffs to the Belgians, but by the pressure on the other 94 per cent (that being about the ratio between the respective consumers). On the other side of the balance sheet, the Belgians are on strike; their attitude keeps a considerable number of Germans off the fighting line; their passive resistance in refusing to work arsenals and machine-shops and railways is a service to the Allies which probably accounts, when interpreted into days, to something greater than the other side of the ledger will show. Assuming that the Germans should in the last resort change their minds and feed the desperate and starving population, they certainly would only do so upon receiving in return the services of this population. Nothing can alter the fact that these people—your allies—will starve or be slaughtered in thousands unless support is given; and to my mind no pleas based on military exigency can divest any of the belligerents of the moral responsibility for which they will be held responsible in history as the result of such a tragedy.

6. In the matter of public sentiment in the neutral world, I can only speak for my own country. In the ordinary course it views European struggles with a practical evenly divided opinion; but in this struggle the English people have won the undoubted sympathy of 95 per cent of my countrymen, because of Belgium, and their belief that the English people are fighting for the restoration of the liberties of this people. My countrymen, greatly affected by the situ-

ation of this civil population, have come forward and continue to come forward with a generosity unprecedented in the history of relief work; and I cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that should this relief work fail to receive the sympathy and support of the English people, it would have a most serious bearing on the whole attitude of public sentiment in the United States.

7. It is not, however, at all on the above grounds that I plead the cause of the Belgian people, men, women, and children; it is on the ground of broad humanity, for which the British people have ever stood, even at their own cost; and this—one of the most critical occasions in the history of your people—is one in which we are certain there will be no failure in their magnanimity.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 147

Memorandum, by HOOVER, *of a conversation with* LLOYD GEORGE *and* VAN DE VYVERE, *in which Lloyd George announced the decision of the British Government to furnish a budgetary allowance to the Belgian Government for relief*

LONDON, 18 February 1915

Had a meeting with Mr. Lloyd George at the Treasury together with Mr. Van de Vyvere and Colonel Hunsiker. Mr. Lloyd George informed us that the British Government had decided to recommend to the French Government a budgetary allowance for the Belgian Government which included £1,000,000 per month for "Mr. Hoover's fund," but that out of this £1,000,000 per month the salaries of the railway employees in Belgium must be paid. After some discussion between Mr. Van de Vyvere and Mr. Lloyd George I gathered that the subsidy would be fixed until the end of June.

I asked Mr. Lloyd George if he had received my memorandum of the previous day and if it was of the character which he desired. He said that it was perfect except in one particular, i.e., that military observations from laymen always infuriated military men and that he had therefore used the document in the Cabinet meeting and presented to them all the points except those of military order. I told him that their decision had taken a load off our hearts, and he replied: "You have made a good fight and deserve to win out."

4. *Income and Expenditures. March 1915–March 1917*

In addition to its benevolent resources the Commission in the first four months of its existence, i.e., to February 1915, secured £3,600,000 in various ways. This sum included the original £100,000 granted by the British Government in No-

vember 1914 and £600,000 advanced by Belgian bankers out of funds held abroad by them. The advances came from the Belgian Government at Havre in December 1914 to February 1915. The successful outcome of Hoover's negotiations for a formal arrangement of regular monthly subsidies resulted in a monthly income to the Commission of Frs. 12,500,000 from the French Treasury and £500,000 from the British Treasury beginning with March 1915, both as loans to the Belgian Government for relief in Belgium. As is described in chapter vi the Commission extended its operations to include Northern France as soon as finances were arranged in April 1915. For this purpose the Commission secured Frs. 25,000,000 in April 1915 and Frs. 12,500,000 each month beginning with May. These sums were advanced out of a sum set aside by the French Treasury and were paid over to the C.R.B. by the Belgian Treasury. Beginning with March 1915, therefore, the Commission received monthly subsidies of the equivalent of approximately $5,000,000 and $2,500,000 for Belgian and French relief respectively, but with no guarantee that these advances would extend beyond June 1915, the beginning of the new harvest. For a few months at any rate the Commission was assured of a substantial portion of its financial requirements. On the other hand, charitable collections so generous in the first few months were now comparatively small and the exchange transactions fell far below expectations. The result was that the Commission still found it impossible in the spring and summer of 1915 to meet the increasing needs of the Belgians. The first step, however, was to secure the continuance of subsidies, inadequate though they were. Hoover's successful negotiations with the Germans for the protection of the harvests as described in chapter viii were responsible for the continuance of subsidies from June onwards. Early in the spring of 1915 he proposed a plan of revival of industry in Belgium which among other benefits was designed to make the Commission in part self-supporting. These negotiations as described in chapter ix were difficult, prolonged, and finally unsuccessful.

During all of 1915 and into 1916 the Commission continued to plead its poverty. In September 1915 the monthly subsidy for French relief was increased to Frs. 20,000,000, i.e., about $3,500,000; but government support for the Belgian program remained at the $5,000,000 set in March 1915 until late in the fall of 1916. This was due to the attitude

of the Germans, their attempts to control the relief distribution organization in Belgium, and the counter demands of the Allies for more inclusive guarantees regarding Belgian native produce.[28] The reorganization and strengthening of its Department of Inspection and Control[29] went a long way toward softening the Allies' attitude toward the Commission. In November 1916 the French and British increased the monthly subsidies to Frs. 18,750,000 and £750,000 for Belgium, and in September 1916 the French increased the subsidy for Northern France to Frs. 35,000,000. For the winter of 1916–17 the C.R.B., therefore, received each month from the Allies the equivalent of about $7,000,000 for Belgium and $6,000,000 for Northern France.

DOCUMENT NO. 148

Letter, HOOVER TO MINISTER HYMANS, *asserting need of additional subsidies if relief is to be continued on present scale*

LONDON, 24 August 1916

His Excellency Paul Hymans
The Belgian Legation, London

DEAR MR. HYMANS:

As I told you a few days ago, we have been endeavoring to secure that Mr. Francqui should come to England to take up with us the whole question of future finance for the Relief. As I have had no word as to whether he is coming it is imperative that I raise the question without further delay.

The position is simply that the realized value of the present subsidy of the Belgian Government is £950,000 a month, whereas, with the extraordinary rise in food prices the past few months, our authorized import program is going to cost over £1,700,000 per month; and in addition to this the Belgian people, as you know, are in need of and are asking for an additional expansion in imports which will cost a further £300,000 per month. In other words, we are in imperative need of a secured income of £2,000,000 per month, or the doubling of our present subsidy. The income from charity is erratic and uncertain. After the fall elections we may perhaps, by increase of our American receipts, reach a total of say £100,000 a month; and our commercial exchange brings us in £25,000 to £30,000 per month, the whole of which is simply a margin of security.

The following table shows the present cost of the program permitted by the Allied Governments:

[28] See chapter iii, Documents 73 and 77.

[29] See chapter ii, Documents 38, 50, and 51.

Commodity	Quarterly quantities authorized by Allied Governments (*Tons*)	Cost per ton (Belgium)	Total cost per quarter
Wheat	162,000	£20	£3,240,000
Bacon	4,000	77	308,000
Lard	8,000	72	576,000
Maize	24,000[a]	10	240,000
Beans and peas	9,000[a]	30	270,000
Rice	15,000[a]	18	270,000
Yeast materials	3,000	13	39,000
Cocoa	1,000	98	98,000
Condensed milk	1,500	50	75,000
Total cost			£5,116,000
Cost per month			£1,705,300

[a] Interchangeable.

The following table shows the total cost of our deliveries into Belgium during the quarter ending July 25th:

Commodity	Quarterly quantities authorized by Allied Governments (*Tons*)	Quantity delivered (*Tons*)	Expenditures
Wheat	162,000	164,187	£2,438,302
Bacon	4,000	3,453	264,345
Lard	8,000	7,499	529,627
Maize	24,000[a]	21	199
Rice	15,000[a]	21,118	363,230
Peas and beans	9,000[a]	2,615	80,804
Yeast materials	3,000	1,931	22,500
Condensed milk	1,500	881	43,167
Total cost			£3,742,174
Cost per month			£1,247,391

[a] Interchangeable.

It will be seen from this table that we did not deliver the full program in some particulars during this quarter, but with the shipping which we now have we shall, during the third quarter of the year, be able to deliver practically the whole program, and we hope to continue it.

I may mention that the rise which has taken place in the cost of wheat during the last few weeks, due to the shortage in the American

harvest, has increased the cost of the Belgian program by no less than £270,000 for this item alone, and the rise in the price of wheat has caused a rise to some extent in all subsidiary cereals. We shall be able to continue the program only until the end of September, and we are able to do this simply by virtue of under-deliveries owing to short tonnage during the past winter, during which period we were able to save something out of our income.

I do not at the present moment raise any question as to ways and means with regard to finance, as I think this matter should be first considered by the Belgian Government, except that I must point out the extreme urgency of the matter.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 149

Letter, BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE TO HOOVER, *stating approval of increase in subsidy for Belgian relief to £1,500,000 monthly*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
27 October 1916

H. C. Hoover, Esq., London

DEAR SIR:

I am now able to inform you that the Cabinet have decided to approve an increase in the subsidy for Belgian relief to £1,500,000[30] per month.

Yours very truly

(Signed) A. W. LIDDERDALE

DOCUMENT NO. 150

Letter, GREY TO PAGE AND MERRY DEL VAL, *declaring that the increased subsidy is conditioned on the participation of the C.R.B. in both the guarantees for the protection of and methods of control of Belgian relief activities*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
7 November 1916

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

1. As Your Excellency is aware, the question of an increase in the subsidy granted by the Allied Governments to the Commission for Relief in Belgium through the Belgian Government has recently been under consideration and His Majesty's Government have agreed to this increase. In connection with this question, however, His Majesty's

[30] From the British Treasury, £750,000, and from the French Treasury, Frs. 18,750,000. The latter realized about £674,000.

Government have had carefully to consider the question of the disposal in Belgium of the moneys arising from the sale of foodstuffs there, and they have only decided to approve the continuance of the subsidy and its increase to a higher figure subject to the following condition:

"That the profits of any sale in occupied territory of foodstuffs bought by the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall not be appropriated to bodies or organizations in such territory which are not covered by the guarantees given by the German Government to the Commission for Relief in Belgium and accepted by His Majesty's Government as the basis for the continuance of the Commission's work."

2. This condition is one to which His Majesty's Government attach the greatest importance, and they desire that all the appropriations made by the Relief Commission in occupied territory should be narrowly scrutinised with a view to ensure that the guarantees of the German Government do, in fact, apply to them in particular. It is hardly necessary to point out that it is an essential point in these guarantees that they are given to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, a neutral body whose independent position enables it to enter into definite contractual relations with the belligerent Governments, and not merely to the Comité National or to other bodies which do not enjoy a similar independence. Consequently, no object or organisation can be regarded as properly protected by the guarantees unless the neutral Commission is a party to all agreements and regulations affecting such object or organisation and is also a party to its management and control.

Believe me, My dear Ambassador,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

His Excellency the Honorable W. H. Page
&c., &c., &c.

[*Identical letter sent to H. E. Senor Don Alfonso Merry del Val*]

DOCUMENT NO. 151

Letter, POLAND TO VAN DE VYVERE, *respecting the financial difficulties of the C.R.B. and the causes*

LONDON, 27 January 1917

His Excellency Monsieur A. Van de Vyvere, Havre

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 23d.

As you anticipated, we have received the sum of Frs. 12,500,000 of the French share of the January subsidy on the old basis.

We note that you hope to adjust the question of the increased subvention on the French account for the months of November, De-

cember, and January, and that against this sum you expect the return of the advance of the sum amounting to approximately Frs. 10,000,000. Within the next few days I expect to forward you a statement of the serious financial situation which is confronting the Commission and the necessity for the immediate increase of the funds available for expenditure by the Commission monthly to approximately £700,000, or, alternatively, the immediate reduction in the Belgian program of imports of something over one-third.

The above situation is the result, first, of the sum necessary to pay for the increased program which was approved, effective in October, not having been provided; and, second, because of the startling increase in the cost of all food products within the last few months.

With assurances of the highest consideration, I beg to remain,

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND, *Director*

DOCUMENT NO. 152

Letter and statement, POLAND TO PERCY, *stating that monthly subsidies must be increased by one million pounds sterling or the import program be reduced by two-fifths*

LONDON, 29 January 1917

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

I beg to hand you a statement of the financial situation of the Commission for Relief in Belgium as of the 25th January 1917, showing, on the basis of the present approved program, the monthly deficit between the cost of imports into Belgium and our average income.

You will see that decision must be made immediately between two alternatives:

a) Either the monthly subventions must be increased by about £1,000,000, or

b) We must immediately reduce the value of our imports into Belgium approximately two-fifths.

This decision must rest with the Allied Governments—we realize how momentous it will be for the people of Belgium.

We should not be carrying out our responsibilities if we failed to give you our judgment on the present food situation of your Allies. Attached hereto is a table showing the per capita per day ration to the whole population, based on the present authorized monthly program of imports and the native food supply.

You will see that this provides for the whole population:

Per capita per day	Grams total	Grams proteins	Grams fats	Grams carbohydrates	Utilized calories
Imported food.....	387	27	28	178	1095
Native food.....	673	20	11	123	730
Total ration.....	1060	47	39	301	1825

It is most difficult to obtain satisfactory figures as to the total native food supplies, but our estimate for Belgium cannot be seriously in error, as wheat, on which we have reliable data, forms about half of the value of the native products.

The ration of the British Isles is estimated at not less than 4,000 calories per capita per day, and the minimum upon which a population may maintain its physical standard under a condition of light work, is generally agreed to be not less than 2,000 calories.

The grave responsibility confronting the Allied Governments, therefore, should it be decided to reduce our imports 40 per cent, will be apparent, as it would leave these people with a per capita ration of but about 1,400 calories per day.

With all the earnestness which over two years of service may entitle us to express, we beg, on behalf of the Belgian people, that this alternative be not chosen.

On the contrary, in accord with our chairman, I ask that the subsidies of the Commission be sufficiently increased to allow us to continue our present imports, based on the minimum program which you have approved.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director

A Statement of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, London, of the current monthly income and requirements as of the 25th January 1917, based on the authorized program, showing the necessity for either an increase of subsidies or a radical reduction of the food imports into Belgium

On the 7th October 1916 Mr. Hoover, Chairman of the Commission, forwarded to the Foreign Office a report of the food position in Belgium, with recommendations as to the absolute minimum food program which must be provided. This included an estimate of the approximate monthly cost. A request was made that the additional monthly quantities specified should be approved for importation and that there should be provided the additional funds necessary to cover the difference between the monthly income at that time and the monthly cost of the new program.

At that time our monthly income for Belgium was about £1,000,000. The total cost of the increased program at prices then existing was £2,070,000, with the prospect of larger charitable donations; it was estimated that an increase of subsidies of £900,000 was necessary.

On October 25th we were advised by Sir Eyre Crowe that the recommended increased program had been approved.

On October 30th notification was received that the British Cabinet had approved increasing the subsidy to the Commission to a total of £1,500,000. At the existing rate of commercial exchange this involved an effective increase in subsidy of £467,000 in place of the £900,000 which had been asked for. This therefore contemplated necessarily a monthly deficit on the basis of the approved program of £433,000.

(It is to be noted in this connection that we have for the months of November, December, and January, received the British portion of the increased subsidy mentioned in the communication of October 30th, but up to the present time we have not received the increased portion of the subsidy from French sources.)

I attach a table which shows the conditions in September (before the new program went into effect) as to quantities, delivery prices, and total cost; the increase in cost of the September program if purchased at January prices; the increase of unit prices, etc.; and the cost of the present authorized program at present prices.

From this you will see that the unit costs of commodities purchased for delivery in September, compared with the current prices as of January 25th, show an increase of 33½ per cent.

Had the September program (before the authorized increase was made) been purchased at the present January 25th prices, it would have cost £2,025,000, or an increase over the September cost of delivery of £510,000.

It will be seen that this January program, upon which our present imports are based, at the prices now obtaining, requires a monthly outlay of £2,516,000.

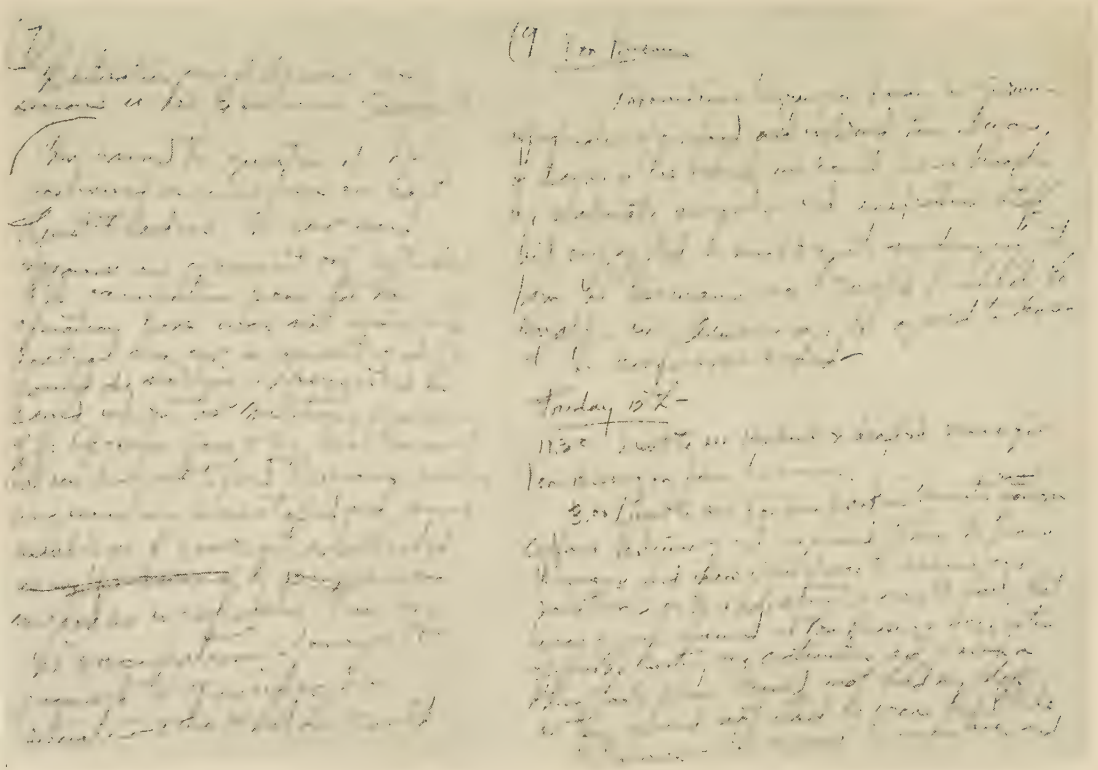
Our monthly income is now approximately as follows:

Received through the Belgian Government:	
a) From British sources	£ 750,000
b) From French sources (increased subvention of October 30th assumed in force)	675,000
Received from Commercial Exchange, public subscriptions, etc.	100,000
Total	£1,525,000
Cost of January program	£2,515,000
Monthly deficit	£ 990,000

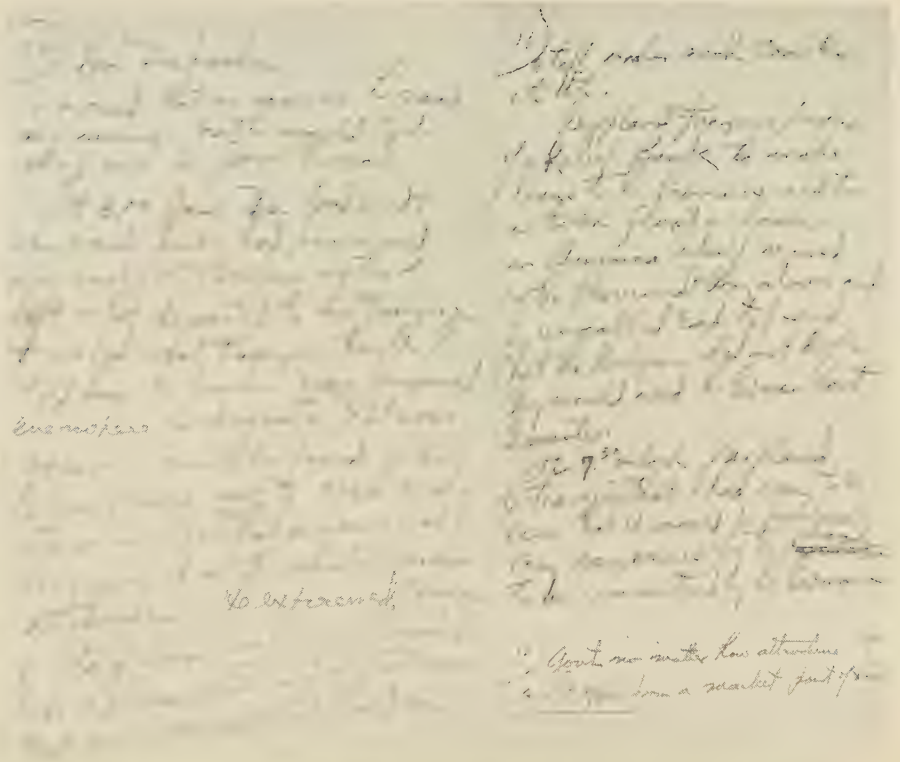
The Commission has been carrying the monthly deficit by drawing upon its working capital in the hope that the necessary increase in subsidy could be arranged. We have depleted this working capital to such a point that our whole credit and operations will be endangered if this depletion is carried further.

One of two alternatives is immediately before us: either our subsidies must be increased, through the proceeds of the proposed relief loan or otherwise, approximately £1,000,000 beyond the provision of the letter of the Foreign Office of October 30th, 1916, or we must cut down our program of imports into Belgium sufficiently to reduce the monthly cost by two-fifths.

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director



Hoover's Memoranda, 11–12 February 1915, of Conferences with German Officials in Brussels *(see page 243)*



Hoover's Memoranda, 11–12 February 1915, of Conferences with German Officials in Brussels

DOCUMENT NO. 153

Extract of letter, POLAND TO HOOVER, *concerning financial position and referring to steps taken to increase subsidies*

LONDON, 2 March 1917

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
New York

MY DEAR HOOVER:

. . . . . .

Finances. I attach herewith a statement showing the approximate financial situation to date. Lord Eustace Percy is now having an interview with Mr. Bonar Law concerning increases and the provisions necessary. I have told him that if they will give us bank guarantees in the United Kingdom for £1,200,000 we shall be able to go on for another month, during which period increases in our subsidies may be arranged. Mr. Chevrillon fears that from no lack of desire but from necessity it will be most difficult to obtain increases on the part of the French Government. Lord Eustace asked whether there was any hope of the United States Government offering to assume part of the cost of ravitaillement. I told him that as Congress adjourns within a couple of days I should think not, but in the event of an extra session I thought there would be a good chance of favorable action, with you in the country to urge it, taking the place for the time of a bond issue.

I was most anxious to have the benefit of Mr. Chevrillon's counsel during this critical time, and he was good enough to come over last Monday. I hope he will remain for some time.

. . . . . .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 154

Letter, POLAND TO PERCY, *stating financial position for April 1917, and new subsidies required*

LONDON, 28 March 1917

Lord Eustace Percy
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

On the 10th February I sent you a statement of the financial situation of the Commission referred to the 1st of February. After the break of diplomatic relations the conditions rapidly changed and under date February 26th I sent you a memorandum showing position for the month of March.

I send you now a similar memorandum as of March 27th, for the month of April 1917.

You will note that there is little change from the situation for March. In order to protect our commitments in London, Rotterdam, Paris, and Scandinavia subsequent to April 30th, to the extent of 40 per cent, the least amount consistent with sound business methods, we still need a confirmed bank credit with the Banque Belge, of £1,325,000.

The above makes no provision for replacing the supplies which we have failed to deliver during the last two months because of the interruption of the service by the Germans. The reason that our cash resources have remained practically *in statu quo* since February 1st is of course due to the fact that we have not been able to send in some 180,000 tons of food.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. Poland
Director

Above statement forwarded to:
Monsieur Hymans, Belgian Minister
Monsieur Carton de Wiart
Monsieur Chevrillon
Monsieur Cambon

5. *The Relief Loan Plan. October 1916–February 1917*

Without relaxing his pressure on the Allied Governments to increase subventions for the Commission, Hoover in October 1916 revived the relief loan[31] proposal first brought forward in the spring of 1915. As the following documents show, the negotiations covering this new effort to break the financial deadlock made slow progress and were abandoned in February 1917 when the Germans launched their unrestricted U-boat campaign. The question of finances for relief was overshadowed by the larger question of whether the Commission could continue at all.[32]

DOCUMENT NO. 155

Telegram, Hoover to Honnold (New York), *on need of funds and possibilities of relief loan in the United States*

London, 5 October 1916

Relief Commission, New York

Financial position of relief particularly Northern France has become extremely grave. Would like have early telegraphic views our New York colleagues on probable success issue short term notes for

[31] See Document 135.

[32] See chapter xii.

relief purposes Northern France. An American Security Company to be created which would issue three-year 5 per cent notes at par secured upon municipal and communal obligations of Northern communes, which would be obtained in same manner as we now operate. Margin of these obligations could be deposited from those we already have in hand. French Government to guarantee entire issue in addition. Whole proceeds to be used by Commission feed occupied French civilians. Loan could be formulated with every sentimental emphasis. Seems to us widespread sympathy for French people humanitarian character of loan would enlist wide clientele not available war loans and proposal of these people borrow money with which to live instead of charity would strike imagination American people. Provision dealers should also help. If we could raise about hundred million dollars for Northern France spread over twelve months and if expenditure under the trust were made retrospective to September 1st, could indirectly greatly assist Belgian position as we could transfer our current income since September 1 to Belgian purposes. Seems to us all our committees could be used to push issue and we earnestly hope for your most valuable consideration and advice at earliest moment.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 156

Telegram, HONNOLD TO HOOVER, *reporting likelihood of failure of relief loan because of other European loans about to be offered in American market*

NEW YORK, 8 October 1916

HOOVER, LONDON

Proposition receiving earnest consideration notwithstanding your suggestion comes at most inopportune time inasmuch as market is flooded with foreign offerings and negotiations for further large loans are pending. However, it may be possible to meet in some degree your wishes, but if so it will probably be for smaller amount and on less favorable terms. We will not remit our efforts and will keep you posted but our feeling is that American absorption of European loans will soon reach point of saturation even when a particularly strong element of sympathy enters. Suggest you confer with H. P. Davison, who is now in London.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 157

Telegram, HOOVER TO HONNOLD, *urging the loan scheme and reporting offers of co-operation of bankers*

LONDON, 15 October 1916

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

It is our idea that a loan to be called the American Relief Commission Loan should on sentimental and national grounds receive the support of the whole American banking community, who should donate their services free even to include underwriting if it should

be considered desirable to underwrite. In this form it should not conflict with any other finance and would represent a truly American backing to America's greatest philanthropic effort. Have seen Morgan and Davison, both of whom evince great interest. They have discussed matter with Government and will discuss matter with you on Davison's return.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 158

Extract of telegram, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *reporting agreement of American bankers to undertake the relief loan without charge*

LONDON, 26 December 1916

CHEVRILLON, PARIS

Have today received following telegram from New York:

"Bankers ready to act on loan soon as formal request received. They reiterate transaction will be undertaken without expense to Relief, this being their Christmas expression of appreciation to you."

It seems to me if British and French Governments in agreement, that the Belgian Government should be approached as soon as possible. It seems to me desirable that the matter should be closed up as quickly as possible. The bankers include Morgans, Guaranty Trust, and all other important groups, who are acting entirely out of good feeling; and I would suggest that Treasury here should be authorized by both French and Belgian Governments to settle whole details with Morgan's firm in London, unless your side can send someone here to fix matter up definitely. I am anxious to go to America at the earliest moment to assist in this issue from a sentimental point of view and to attend to other important matters concerning the relief. I have a request to come to Washington to discuss certain matters and am wanted there by January 15th.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 159

Letter, HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, *describing the status of relief loan negotiations and requesting him to intervene with the French and British Governments to advance the matter*

LONDON, 9 January 1917

His Excellency, Monsieur A. Van de Vyvere
Minister of Finance, Havre

DEAR MR. VAN DE VYVERE:

Some two months ago we were asked by the French officials to undertake negotiations for a loan in America for the support of the relief in Northern France, to be assured upon municipal obligations from that territory, with the guarantee of the French Government. A great deal of negotiation has taken place between myself and the American bankers, as represented by a committee in New York which embraces practically the whole of the banking strength of

the United States. Finally, on the 24th December I was advised by them that they considered that to make a successful loan for relief purposes it would have to be issued on behalf of the Belgian, French, and British Governments jointly. They considered that such a loan could be made without security and probably for $150,000,000 and as a contribution toward the relief; and as a compliment personal to myself, they offered to undertake the issue of the loan without any charge whatever. It was understood that the loan would be for a short time, but neither the rate of interest nor the period has yet been suggested.

I laid the position immediately before the French Government, suggesting that they should take the matter up with yourselves and the British Government, and I asked Mr. Francqui and Mr. Sengier to inform you fully of the position, and they inform me that you are fully agreeable in principle. I had so confidently expected that the matter would have been brought officially to your attention that I had taken passage on the steamer leaving last Saturday, with the anticipation that matters would be so advanced that I could proceed to New York, it being the unanimous desire of the American bankers that I should be there to formulate the propaganda in the matter.

It appears that the French Government has taken the matter up with the British Government, but some difference of opinion apparently at the same time exists between them as to the relation of this loan to other arrangements between the French and British governments, and so the matter is dragging very badly.

I am rather anxious at the present moment, as the opportunity has been created and the high level of sentiment which exists at the present moment toward Belgium in the United States should be taken advantage of without further delay; and furthermore as Mr. Sengier informs me you are despaired of further increasing our subsidies beyond £1,500,000 a month. You know the cost of the present program is close on £2,100,000 and unless we can see some daylight I see no alternative but to reduce the food supply by the end of this month.

This loan would be a solution to the situation, and I am wondering whether or not you could not intervene to advance the matter.

The American groups ask that they should be formally requested by the Allied Governments to undertake this loan, and they have appointed Messrs. Morgan, Grenfell & Co. to negotiate on behalf of all of them, and these formalities are necessary to get the matter in motion. The loan is to be issued with the endorsement of the Commission for Relief, to be undertaken by the American bankers without charge, and to appeal to that section of the American public which will not subscribe for war loans. It is therefore necessary to agree on a formula as to the purpose and method of spending the money; and I propose the following, which meets the acceptance of our New York colleagues:

"The object of the loan is to provide continued financial support to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, for the relief of the civil population in the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France. The proceeds of the loan are to be deposited with the bankers of the Governments and retained by them solely for the purposes

set out below, and are to be drawn upon by the Commission in monthly sums sufficient to cover the monthly food imports authorized by the Allied Governments. The proceeds of the loan are in the first instance to be expended for the ravitaillement of the civil population and the support of the destitute in the occupied territories by and under the direction of the Commission for Relief in Belgium; and the Commission shall continue as heretofore to be administered by a neutral Chairman appointed with the approval of the American Ambassadors and Ministers in Europe and by Directors appointed by the Chairman. If peace should intervene leaving an unexpended balance, such balance shall be released to the French and Belgian Governments to be expended upon the economic rehabilitations of the civil population. The loan shall be called the Relief Commission Loan."

The interrelations between the three Governments are of course not a matter which concerns the bankers or myself. I would suggest to you, however, that the actual cost of the relief as between the two countries is 40 per cent to the French and 60 per cent to the Belgians. This may form for you an idea as to the relative basis of repayment. The formula which I have set out above, you will see, provides for the expenditure of the loan on the basis of the commodities authorized, which would enable us to take whatever is necessary with rising and falling prices.

There appear to me to be many advantages in doing this operation, and doing it quickly, for, aside from the above objects, it is an effective guarantee of the continuity of the Relief, as it would be difficult to terminate such a relation set up between the American people and the Belgian people. It also would appear to me to be an advantage to the credit of the Belgian Government to be a party to a successful loan. Furthermore, the loan, if successful, will enable us to stop public appeals for charity and substitute the dignity of a well credited borrower therefor.

I am very anxious to get off for America on Saturday the 13th, at least, leaving the position such that it may be signed up and ordered by telegraph by the time I should arrive in New York, as my colleagues are very insistent that we must strike the iron while it is hot.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 160

Telegram, POLAND TO HOOVER (NEW YORK), *on progress of Allied approval of loan*

LONDON, 20 January 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Accord between governments regarding Commission loan progressing, but no further action likely until time appears to bankers favorable for launching a new loan. In view of uncertainty it appears to us advisable approach governments here concerning immediate increase subsidies. Do you approve?

CHEVRILLON, POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 161

Telegram, POLAND TO HOOVER, *reporting failure of British Government to act on matter of the relief loan*

LONDON, 11 February 1917

HOOVER, NEW YORK
Confidential

So far find it impossible obtain any definite information from Government here as to loan. Are continually put off. Am again representing imperative that definite advice be given us at once. Are you in favor of issuing ultimatum that unless definite statement of some sort be made to us immediately the Relief will definitely and permanently withdraw from any connection with loan?

Expect forward New York $9,500,000 from income February, instead $7,000,000, and in addition am asking British Government forward $5,700,000 to fully protect New York liabilities and in addition to establish British guaranteed confirmed credit with Banque Belge, London, for £1,370,000 to cover overdrafts and partially cover European liabilities.

POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 162

Telegram, HOOVER TO POLAND, *directing that loan matter not be pushed until issues raised by the unrestricted submarine campaign be settled*

NEW YORK, 14 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Please allow loan matter to lie entirely quiescent until we have solved our two great problems of a shipping lane to Rotterdam and the re-establishment of a neutral body to take over the distribution. In any event it would be impossible for us to put out the loan until the relief has been re-established. If the relief is re-established, the bankers here are confident of their ability to issue the loan without difficulty. In the meantime we will be glad to receive all the cash you can forward to this end.

HOOVER

6. *The United States Government and Relief Finance. April 1917–March 1919*

The severance of diplomatic relations with Germany by the United States and the subsequent declaration of war had important consequences for the Commission. The first ef-

fects concerned the functions of the C.R.B. in Belgium. These are discussed in chapter xii. Of only less importance were the effects in financial arrangements. Since 1914 the American Government had given diplomatic support to the Commission abroad and official backing in the United States as the only agency authorized to carry charitable aid to the Belgians through the blockade. None of the Commission's funds, however, had come from the United States Treasury, but with America in the war the Commission turned to Washington for financial support. One of the first of America's war measures was the establishment of large credits in favor of the Allies, whose enormous war expenditures had brought them to a desperate financial situation. The Commission saw to it that in connection with these war credits there was specific provision for Belgian and French relief. Thus there were relief loans to Belgium and France out of which $7,500,000 and $5,000,000 monthly were to be advanced to the Commission for its program in Belgium and Northern France. Up to the time these credits became available the British and French treasuries had turned over to the Commission approximately $270,000,000.

DOCUMENT NO. 163

Telegram, C.R.B. New York to Hoover,[33] *advising probable Congressional action respecting Allied credits*

New York, 26 March 1917

Relief Commission, London

Inform Hoover with minimum delay as follows:

It is not improbable President in message to Congress April 2d will recommend large credit to Allies, possibly billion dollars. If this is done, think may be able to have him specifically recommend that certain amount, say one to two hundred million be earmarked for Belgian relief, also possibly recommend that, say two million be specially voted as gift to cover Commission's expenses. Please cable earliest possible your views, also whether Belgian Government would welcome such a loan. If we are to proceed with the matter, please send suitable cables urging same which can be used in lobbying and have similar cables sent from Belgian Government.

Relief Commission

[33] Hoover returned to London in March 1917. Beginning with May 1917 his headquarters were Washington.

DOCUMENT NO. 164

Letter, PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE C.R.B.[34] TO PRESIDENT WILSON, *requesting that part of the proposed credit to the Allies be allocated for relief work in Belgium and France*

29 March 1917

To the President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

SIR:

Your Committee, appointed to co-operate with the Commission for Relief in Belgium, have the honor to submit for your consideration the following suggestions:

First: There is a prevailing report current in the press of the country that in the event of the United States entering into the war with Germany a credit of large magnitude will be created for the benefit of some or all of the Allied Governments. We suggest that in case this be done a portion of the credit so offered be specifically allocated by previous agreement with the borrowers for expenditure by our Commission in the relief work now carried on in the occupied areas of Belgium and Northern France. Such a course would have, as it seems to us, several advantages: It would inure directly to the benefit of the Allies because to that extent it would relieve them of the monthly payments they are themselves making for the same purpose; at the same time it would give to this country an appropriate share in the responsibility and burden of financing a work which has been carried on, though unofficially, in the name of the United States.

It is not our opinion or desire that the advances thus made should be permitted to replace or diminish private relief. If the contemplated advance, as we assume it may be, is made in a form to carry with it financial assistance to the recipient on terms more beneficial than current in the market, the corresponding burden to this country thus assumed might be distributed to private subscribers, who would then be afforded an apportunity to help *pro tanto* in the support of Belgium. In any event we propose to continue our efforts to stimulate charitable gifts.

The following particulars as to our needs and resources are submitted for your guidance:

The foodstuffs we are permitted to deliver into Belgium and Northern France call for a monthly expenditure (mainly in American purchases) of about		$18,000,000
Our monthly receipts from the Governments of Great Britain and France for account of Belgium are	$7,000,000	
Our monthly receipts from the Government of France for account of Northern France are	6,000,000	13,000,000
Leaving to be provided through benevolence		$ 5,000,000

[34] The origin and purpose of this Committee are explained in chapter xv.

As a matter of fact our receipts from benevolence have averaged less than $1,000,000 per month, America's contributions averaging only about $300,000 per month; consequently, we have never been able, and are not now able, to provide for these 10,000,000 people even the meager ration authorized by the Allied Governments.

Our second suggestion is that a recommendation should be made by the President to Congress for an appropriation of $2,000,000 as a gift to cover the working expenses of the Commission from its inception to the end of the current year. This represents less than five-eights of one per cent of the moneys handled by the Commission, a fact of striking significance, reflecting, as it does, not only the ability with which its affairs have been administered, but also the value of the voluntary services rendered by those responsible. Up to the present such expenses have been met out of the funds provided by the Allied Governments. This has always been a matter of chagrin to Mr. Hoover and the members of the Commission, and it would lift a burden from their hearts if they could feel that the services they have administered in the name of America and for which they have been overwhelmed with expressions of gratitude, has indeed been rendered by America free of expense to the recipients.

Yours respectfully

(Signed) A. J. Hemphill
Chairman of Advisory Committee[35]

DOCUMENT NO. 165

Telegram, Honnold to Hoover, *stating probable manner in which Allied credits will be passed and asking Hoover to secure assurances from Belgian and French Governments that they desire credits for the Commission*

London, 15 April 1917

Relief Commission, London

Credit for Allies will probably pass House today in blanket form and Senate before middle next week. Allocation will be left to President, who anxious to provide specifically for Commission say one year's requirements or one hundred fifty millions. Cannot do this, however, unless you assure us that governments concerned so desire. Without such assurances our requirements will be merged in general credits to governments concerned and Commission will continue to draw its support from them as in the past. Very anxious to have assurance asked for before middle next week as seeing McAdoo with Bertron soon as bill passed. If you are able to arrange have you any suggestions as to how money should be paid to us and whether directly or through French and Belgian financial agents.

[35] At this date the Presidential Advisory Committee comprised: Alexander J. Hemphill, S. Reading Bertron, C. A. Coffin, R. Fulton Cutting, Elbert H. Gary, William L. Honnold, John F. Lucey, Henry L. Stimson, Oscar S. Straus, John Beaver White, Frank A. Vanderlip, and Frank Trumbull.

Think you will agree that it is in interest of governments concerned to have Commission's needs specifically allocated, since apart from other considerations it is not improbable that sooner or later the resulting loans will be cancelled. Furthermore additional and perhaps more substantial assistance will be more certainly assured for the future if America be allowed to commit herself now in a way to our support. Since present bill provides credits only for Europe, it will be necessary to pass special bill to cover expenses. This is agreed to in principle, but am asked to submit substantiating figures when in Washington next week. Kindly cable soon as possible more or less itemized statement past expenditure and estimate for future.

HONNOLD

DOCUMENT NO. 166

Letter, DE FLEURIAU TO HOOVER, *quoting approval of French Government to American credits for the Commission*

LONDON, 16 April 1917

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have communicated to Mr. Ribot the substance of your letter of yesterday concerning the kind intention of the President Wilson to provide for the financial needs of the Commission for Relief if the interested Governments agreed to that proposal. I am now authorized to express to you the agreement of the French Government and I think advisable to quote the terms of the telegram of Mr. Ribot:

"J'approuve en ce qui concerne le Gouvernement français et le ravitaillement des régions françaises envahies l'ouverture de crédits que M. le Président Wilson se propose de faire à la Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France, et qui témoigne une fois de plus de la sympathie montrée par les Etats Unis à cette oeuvre si essentiellement humanitaire. Comme l'a indiqué M. Hoover, dès que la question de principe aura été réglée, nous étudierons de concert les points de détail et d'exécution.

RIBOT"

Please excuse the informality of that paper and believe me

Yours sincerely

(Signed) A. de FLEURIAU

DOCUMENT NO. 167

Telegram, HOOVER TO C.R.B. (NEW YORK), *reporting Belgian suggestion that sufficient of American loan to Allies be allocated to relief to permit discontinuance of benevolent appeals*

LONDON, 18 April 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Belgian Government officially state that they would be very grateful if American Government would earmark from proposed forthcoming advances to Allies a sufficient sum to cover the whole cost of relief

and it should be sufficiently large to cover the whole of Commission's requirements, thus eliminating external benevolent appeals. They have advised Minister in Washington. Owing to the very necessary restriction in shipping and general food difficulties, we have reduced Belgian and French program to the absolute minimum on which they can subsist by drawing on their resources of cattle, et cetera, and the total cost on the reduced basis will work out at about thirteen million dollars per month. Taking into account cash we have in hand, earmarking 150 million dollars would be sufficient to carry us over twelve months.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 168

Letter, HOOVER TO CONGRESSMAN FLOOD, *withdrawing the Commission's request that the Government make special appropriation to cover administration expenses of the Commission in view of the loan of $75,000,000 agreed upon 24 April 1917*

WASHINGTON, 19 May 1917

DEAR MR. FLOOD:

I have been thinking about the request which the Commission for Relief in Belgium has made for a special appropriation to cover the expense of the work of the Commission during the last two and one-half years. You are no doubt aware that the Government has agreed on a loan of $75,000,000 to France and Belgium to cover the needs of the Commission for the present.

The idea at the bottom of the original request, which was made before the recent loan was agreed to, was to obtain some Government support of the financial needs of the Commission, and to secure a certain measure of Government connection with an approval of the work to reinforce its position in Europe. Now that the Government has done so much more in recognition of the Relief work by granting the special loan to cover the needs of the work for the next six months, it seems to me unnecessary for us to ask for any further recognition or aid. As we have been compelled to resell a large quantity of foodstuffs bought but which we were unable to ship due to the suspension of our operations for a period at the outset of the submarine war, we have made a considerable profit on these goods, against which we can debit the Commission's overhead costs, and thus not be forced to take them from the credits established by charitable gifts or subsidies from our Allies.

If this suggestion meets with your approval, I shall be glad to be understood as withdrawing our request for a special appropriation for expense.

Very truly yours

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

The first monthly subsidy from the United States Treasury for Belgium became available in May 1917 and for Northern

France the following month, and with these advances the customary subventions from Allied sources ceased. This discontinuance of Allied advances caused the Commission a temporary embarrassment, as the American subsidies were available only for expenditure in the United States, while the Commission had European disbursements for freights and purchases amounting to around $5,000,000 a month. It required some time to reorganize charters and contracts so that the maximum obligations could be liquidated in America, and to arrange for funds for the necessary European expenses. During this period the Commission utilized charitable funds and certain balances which remained from previous Allied subsidies. Moreover, during a few months of 1917 the German U-boat blockade was so tight that the Commission was able to deliver only a small percentage of its program. Cargoes of perishable supplies had to be diverted and sold, and hence during these months the Commission "saved" certain sums because of the interruption in its operations. When the Germans finally agreed to establish a safe lane for relief vessels, the flow of importation began on a somewhat restricted scale but at a cost far in excess of previous months as a result of the rise in freights and the prices of foodstuffs. By October 1917 all the Commission's funds which were free for expenditure in Europe were exhausted.

DOCUMENT NO. 169

Letter, Foreign Office to Poland, *asking the C.R.B. to refund the unexpended balance of sums received from British credits*

Foreign Office, London
5 July 1917

The Secretary,
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

Sir:

I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st ultimo, in which you state that the French and British subsidies for April and May have been paid over to the Commission but that the whole amount received has not been expended.

2. I am to observe that sums actually spent after the end of May 1917 would appear to give rise to a claim against the Government of the United States of America. I am therefore to request that you will

arrange to refund the unexpended balance, as on the 1st ultimo, of sums which the Commission has received from British credits.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient, humble Servant

(Signed) MAURICE DE BUNSEN

DOCUMENT NO. 170

Letter, POLAND TO BRITISH UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE, *pointing out that to refund the unexpended balance as requested would necessitate the liquidation of C.R.B. affairs*

LONDON, 13 July 1917

The Under-Secretary of State, Foreign Office

DEAR SIR:

Replying to your letter of the 5th of July in regard to claims against the Government of the United States, the position of the British Government in this matter is not quite clear to me. There is of course no distinction in our accounts between funds received from the British or French Governments for the ravitaillement of Belgium. Our subsidies, as you are aware, have always been made to us through the Belgian Government. It was our understanding merely that the United States Government had agreed to make it possible for the Belgian Government to place a loan in the United States and had agreed to furnish $45,000,000 at the rate of $7,500,000 per month if necessary for six months in order to provide the Belgian Government with sufficient funds to carry on the ravitaillement in place of the subsidies which had previously been supplied by the British and French Governments. This, however, is a part of the transaction with which we have nothing to do in our accounts and upon which we are only unofficially advised. Our monthly transactions vary from £2,000,000 to £3,000,000, and our contingent liabilities usually are about £8,000,000 to £9,000,000. To obtain the unexpended balances on hand at any time, it would of course be necessary to close our accounts and completely liquidate our affairs, which would require considerable time.

It was our understanding that there was to be no liquidation of the affairs of the C.R.B. but that the regular procedure would be carried on as usual with money supplied to us as usual by the Belgian Government.

Since we are unadvised in regard to this, will it be possible for you to furnish us with the agreements upon which the claim against the United States is based, whereupon we will immediately refer the matter to Washington and endeavor to have it put in order.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 171

Telegram, HOOVER TO POLAND, *stating that American Government loans to belligerents must be spent in the United States and urging that British and French Governments continue to finance European purchases of C.R.B.*

WASHINGTON, 30 October 1917

COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, LONDON

With respect to your various telegrams on expenditures to be made in Europe, we agree it is absolutely vital to continue purchases in Holland and in England. Our only concern is to secure the necessary funds in Europe. There is no reason why European Governments should not renew advances to the Belgian Government for relief purposes. The terms of American loan do not permit remittance of these moneys abroad, and any method as to guarantees or payment to the Wheat Executive are simply evasions of the American law on this subject and we cannot in any particular participate in them. In a broad way the remittance of money to Europe for this purpose would simply mean reduction of funds available for Allied purpose in the United States and in no way assists the general situation. I am asking Mr. Lansing to take the matter up formally with the various governments concerned; in meantime I see no reason why Belgian Government should not itself guarantee Banque Belge the necessary overdraft which you require. We are in entire sympathy with purchase of clothing, but it all comes under the same heading. We are not dealing with a sentimental situation but with a simple war necessity; no one can accuse this Government of failing to take its proper part in the whole war situation and you need have no fears in this direction. An appeal had been made to the President by the King of the Belgians, to which the President has replied that the American Government will give every assistance for expenditures in the United States, but he asks the King of the Belgians to interest himself in securing the provision of the necessary funds from the European governments concerned to carry on European expenditures of Commission.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 172

Telegram,[36] ALBERT, KING OF THE BELGIANS, TO PRESIDENT WILSON, *urging additional American finance and ships for Belgian relief*

18 October 1917

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. WOODROW WILSON,
President of the United States of America, Washington

During more than three years the American Commission for Relief under Mr. Hoover's able leadership has achieved with marked success and under the most trying circumstances the task of sup-

[36] For reply to this message see chapter v, Document 247.

plying the Belgian nation with the bare necessities of life. Moreover, Your Excellency's Government has lately assumed the burden of financing the Commission. Those unmistakable marks of sympathy make me feel confident that whatever the difficulties may be, the United States will never allow their noble work to be jeopardized. However, since several months the imports of foodstuffs have been inadequate and the last reports which reach me from the invaded territory are such that I consider it my duty to make a personal appeal to your intervention. The Belgian population is confronted not only with hardship and suffering but with actual famine; the death rate is steadily increasing. Infantile mortality is appalling. Tuberculosis is spreading and threatening the future of the race. Only by immediate and energetic action can the lives of many of my unhappy people be saved during the impending winter. My Government has put all available ships at the disposal of the Commission and is unable to provide for more. For the additional transports as well as for cargoes and financial means Belgium must rely entirely upon the United States. I do not doubt but your Excellency will give to Mr. Hoover full power to meet the present emergency with adequate measures, and in such conditions we are confident that Mr. Hoover will assure the success of the great task he has nobly assumed in the name of the American nation.

ALBERT

DOCUMENT NO. 173

Telegram, FRENCH MINISTER OF FINANCE TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR AT LONDON, *asking that British Government agree to French and Belgian financing of European expenses of C.R.B.*

PARIS, 25 November 1917

TO THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR, LONDON
From the Minister of Finance

I had a conversation on Friday with Mr. Van de Vyvere, Belgian Minister of Finance, on the subject of the credits necessary to enable the C.R.B. to meet its expenses in America and Europe.

1. The monthly credits opened for account of the C.R.B. in the United States are to be increased from 12½ million dollars to 15 million dollars—6 million as France's share and 9 million as Belgium's. The American Government have given their consent to this increase, on the condition that the Belgian and French Governments guarantee to provide for the European expenses of the C.R.B.

2. I gave this guarantee as far as I was concerned, and asked our delegates to notify Washington and make arrangements with the Federal Treasury to increase our monthly contribution from 5 to 6 million dollars. To enable the Belgian Government to give a similar guarantee, which they are willing to do, the adherence of the British Government is indispensable. It has been agreed with Mr. Van de Vyvere that joint action should be taken by the French and Belgian

Governments to obtain the consent of the British Government. After you have consulted the Belgian Minister, who is to receive instructions to act in concert with you, I would ask you to state the following proposition:

The French Government will undertake to provide for a third of the monthly expenditures for relief—i.e., the fraction corresponding to the needs of the French population; the other two-thirds—about £1,500,000—to be taken by the Belgian Government from the joint advance made to them by the British and French Governments. It is important to obtain the consent of the British Government to this arrangement.

But the authorization given to the Belgian Government to effect this transaction will only result in distributing the burden of the credits destined for the European expenses of the C.R.B., which expenditures are almost equally divided between England, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries. If the British Treasury is opposed, as I have reason to believe, to the employment of pounds sterling for payments of the two last categories, the only way open to the C.R.B. would be to obtain credit openings in its name in Holland and in the Scandinavian countries. In view of the negotiations which the C.R.B. will enter into, I have agreed to give the French Government's guarantee, and I have every reason to hope that the British Government will give theirs.

[*Translation*]

At no time since the First Battle of the Marne were the Allies nearer defeat than during the summer and fall of 1917. The German U-boat campaign did enormous damage to shipping on which the Allied cause was so dependent. On land the ambitious Nivelle offensive in April ended in disaster and was followed by mutinies in the French Army. The collapse of Kerensky's final drive in Galicia in July signalized the end of Russia as a military factor in the war. In late October occurred the battle of Caporetto where Italy suffered the worst defeat of the war. Except in finance, which was more important than is often recognized, the weight of American assistance had not begun to be felt.

These months were a correspondingly difficult time for the Commission. In addition to the critical shortage of shipping there was a short crop in America and the further complication of a near breakdown of railroad transportation. The occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France had been on short rations from the first of the year, and the Commission was helpless to augment its importations to relieve the growing distress. There was, in fact, no single problem

of finance, of shipping, of supplies, but a general problem of relief in which all these elements were involved. During most of this critical period Hoover was in America organizing the production and conservation of food supplies on which the Allies—and the relief of Belgium and France—depended. In addition to these heavy responsibilities he continued as active Chairman of the C.R.B. and with the shifting of the center of gravity in economic war matters from England to America he continued to conduct the important negotiations concerning these matters.[37]

The United States Government pursued a generous policy toward the relief within the restrictions of the Congressional enactment. At Hoover's request the United States Treasury in November 1917 increased its monthly subventions to $9,000,000 for Belgium and $6,000,000 for Northern France. There was no increase in this amount until November 1918, when the monthly subvention for Belgium was raised to $20,000,000 for rehabilitation. There was no increase in the advances to France, and relief subventions to both were discontinued in March 1919 when relief purchases ceased and the Commission began liquidation.[38]

The following documents deal largely with the successful efforts of W. B. Poland, the European Director of the Commission, to secure the necessary funds from the Allied Treasuries for the Commission's European disbursements. Poland secured, first, certain advances which enabled the Commission to liquidate the overdrafts in London banks which it had been forced to make in order to keep the stream of supplies moving. This matter of European finance—like that of shipping—was put on a more satisfactory basis when, as a result of Poland's energetic representations to the newly formed Allied Supreme War Council, the Entente Powers adopted the principle that Belgian relief was a "war measure" and entitled to equal priority in the matter of finance and ships with other war activities.[39] This arrangement, however, deprived the Commission of some of its independence in Europe, for thereafter its program of ships and of food had to be passed on by the Allied Maritime

[37] See Documents 171 and 184; 243–262, chapter v; 508–510, chapter xii.

[38] Chapter xiii.

[39] See Document 252, chapter v.

Transport Council (A.M.T.C.)[40] and the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement (C.I.R.).[41]

This method of procedure[42] went into effect in January 1918, and from that time on the Commission liquidated its European costs through the British Ministries of Shipping and Food and the Admiralty. Relations with the A.M.T.C. and the C.I.R. were uniformly satisfactory.

DOCUMENT NO. 174

Letter, POLAND TO PRIME MINISTER LLOYD GEORGE, *asking for a decision from the British Government to guarantee, with France, the European expenses of the C.R.B. to prevent the breakdown of the relief work*

LONDON, 21 December 1917

To the Right Honorable David Lloyd George,
Prime Minister

SIR:

In the early days of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, now nearly three years ago, the scope of the work, the method of operation, and the safeguards in the form of German undertakings surrounding the ravitaillement of the populations of the invaded territories of Belgium and the North of France were carefully explained to you. We realized that your support of the work was absolutely essential to its continuance. You gave this support and have continued to give it, sometimes under adverse criticism.

A new and critical situation in respect of this work has now arisen, due to the inaction of the British Government, which, failing action on the part of the officers of the Foreign Office or the Treasury, we are now forced to bring to you.

During the early months of the brutal submarine campaign it was impossible for us to import anything approaching the proper ration for the 9,500,000 people for whose care we became the agents of the Governments and peoples of Belgium, France, Great Britain, and the United States.

On the basis of restricted imports the limited subsidies at our disposal sufficed for a number of months, although toward the end, with a deficit of nearly £1,000,000 per month.

In October, owing to the enormous increase in prices and to the fact that we are at last able to forward something approaching an adequate ration, the cost of the program of imports which after the most rigid inspection had been approved by the British Foreign

[40] One of the most important Inter-Allied economic bodies, organized to make the most efficient use of the available Allied shipping.

[41] Established in 1914 to co-ordinate the purchases in Great Britain of the Allies and departments of the British Government. Though theoretically international the C.I.R. was largely directed by the British, upon whom the other Allies were dependent for funds.

[42] See Document 183.

Office and the French Government as absolutely necessary to maintain national life, was found to reach the figure of £5,500,000 per month, or $26,000,000.

On October 20th, a memorandum was despatched by the Commission to the Governments of Great Britain, Belgium, and France, setting forth the whole situation as to food, ships, and finance, and request was made that adequate funds be immediately provided.

After numerous negotiations, the United States declared that it would provide in the form of loans $15,000,000 per month for expenditure in the United States provided France and Great Britain would guarantee the European expenditures of the Relief, amounting to $11,000,000.

At a meeting on November 25th, the French Government agreed to carry:

a) The whole European cost of the ravitaillement of the French population.

b) One-half of European cost of the ravitaillement of the Belgian population, provided England would carry the other half. It was requested that the Belgian Government be allowed to allocate to the Relief the necessary funds out of the joint loan of Frs. 500,000,000 made by France and Great Britain to Belgium.

c) In order to overcome the very difficult situation regarding Guilder exchange and to furnish the Commission with the 6,000,000 guilders required for its monthly operations in Holland, the French Government authorized the Director of the Commission to effect a benevolent loan in Holland to the amount of 60,000,000 guilders, for which it agreed to deposit French Bons du Tresor and requested England to give a like authorization and to agree to participate in the deposit of collateral.

This proposal was forwarded through the French Ambassador to the British Government.

Up to the present time, no answer has been received by the French Government, nor has the Commission for Relief been given any decision or any assistance by the British Government in the financing of this work. We have presented to both the Foreign Office and to the Treasury complete expositions of our financial situation and definite statements of what was required to keep the work of relief going.

Briefly, the situation is as follows:

In Holland we require from 6,000,000 to 7,000,000 florins per month for the payment of certain freights and insurances which cannot be paid elsewhere; for the unloading and despatch from Holland to Belgium and France of the cargoes imported; to pay for the purchases of from 5,000 to 10,000 tons of native Dutch produce which otherwise would have to be purchased overseas. Our funds in Holland will only carry this work to the 1st of January, after which date the relief of the invaded territories must absolutely cease, unless new credits are provided.

In the United Kingdom we have been carrying on operations only through the courtesy of the Banque Belge in granting us an unsecured

overdraft, which overdraft must be repaid on January 1st. This overdraft now amounts to approximately £500,000 and will amount to £800,000 by December 31st.

We have requested of the Foreign Office the following action by the British Government:

1. That there be deposited at once in Holland to the credit of the Commission for Relief the sum of 6,000,000 florins.

2. That the British Government deposit in sterling, in London, to the credit of the Commission for Relief, the sum of £2,500,000 to meet the overdraft at the Banque Belge and to finance our operations for the month of January.

Failing such action being taken immediately, the Relief must cease.

I beg to call your attention to what we believe to be facts in regard to the relief, that is, that if ever the people of the invaded territories and likewise the people of France and the United States, and to a certain extent the people of England, come to know that the Allies have abandoned to starvation the 9,500,000 of their own people, the war will cease. The twenty-nine deputies of the North of France, the most influential in the French Assembly, are determined that their population shall be fed. They are able to combine at any moment with the Pacifist and Socialist elements in France, and can, overnight, cause the downfall of any French Ministry which fails to declare the protection of the invaded regions part of their fundamental policy.

Through its representatives, the population of Belgium can exert a powerful force in the same direction, not only in France, but on its own army. There is no doubt that the recent conditions of semi-starvation which existed in the occupied territories drove some hundreds of thousands of excellent workmen and workwomen into the employ of the Germans, either in Belgium, Northern France, or in Germany, and this released to the front line trenches equivalent numbers of German soldiers. The correctness of this general estimate of the strategic and military aspect of the relief is assented to and concurred in unofficially by officers of the French Government. We should like an opportunity of discussing it with you.

The present situation of the Relief is absolutely critical and unless the British Government acts within the next few days this organization will be bankrupt and discredited, not only in the commercial sense but as to the reputation of its executives, who, depending upon the action of the British Government, have guaranteed to the Banque Belge protection of the overdraft.

Having apparently failed in bringing this situation to the realization of any of the officials of the British Government, as a last resort we are appealing to your sense of justice and humanity and military expediency, in which we have the most absolute confidence. I desire greatly to be accorded the privilege of an interview, in order to present this situation briefly, and have taken the liberty of thus addressing you at the suggestion of our Ambassador, Mr. Page.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director of Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 175

Letter, Banque Belge pour l'Étranger, London, to the Commission, *requesting reimbursement of overdraft*

London, 22 December 1917

Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

Dear Sirs:

We are in receipt of your letter of the 21st instant, and note that the overdraft you may require in the next few days may have to be increased to £600,000 or £700,000, to be repaid out of a remittance you expect.

As already explained such large overdrafts are not usually convenient at the end of the year when banks are making up accounts and calling in loans, and we trust that you may be in a position to reimburse the overdraft before the close of the year.

We are, dear Sirs,

Yours faithfully

Banque Belge pour l'Étranger

DOCUMENT NO. 176

Telegram, Poland to Lloyd George, *stating that unless Allies agree as to financing C.R.B. European expenses it will be necessary to halt relief after 1 January 1918*

London, 27 December 1917

The Right Honourable David Lloyd George, Prime Minister

Following my communication to you of the twenty-first, as we have been advised of no action and as our funds were exhausted we were forced to stop all purchases of food in Holland and the United Kingdom which amount to about twenty-eight thousand tons per month. The French Government this afternoon have generously agreed to provide us with a temporary advance of one million pounds but this will only satisfy our overdraft and carry us until just over January first after which time unless the Allies are able to reach an understanding in regard to financing the work in Europe we shall be obliged to announce to the world that because of lack of funds we are no longer able to provide food for these people. I trust that before this grave action is forced on us you will grant us the opportunity which I have requested of presenting the case to you in person.

Poland
Director for Europe
Commission Relief in Belgium

DOCUMENT NO. 177

Telegram, LLOYD GEORGE TO POLAND, *referring him to the Treasury and the Foreign Office*

TREASURY, 1 January 1918

W. B. POLAND, ESQ.,
3 London Wall Buildings, E.C.

Matter referred to in telegram of the 27th December has been referred to Chancellor of Exchequer and the Foreign Office for decision. Please communicate with them.

LLOYD GEORGE

DOCUMENT NO. 178

Letter, POLAND TO LORD ROBERT CECIL, *referring to the above telegram and asking for a decision*

LONDON, 1 January 1918

Lord Robert Cecil,
The Foreign Office

DEAR LORD ROBERT CECIL:

I have received today a telegram from Mr. Lloyd George, stating that the question of finances for the relief of the occupied territories of Belgium and France has been referred to the Foreign Office and the Treasury and requesting that I communicate with you and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. As I advised at the recent meeting on December 29th, the Relief has already had to be stopped in Holland as to purchases of food and in the United Kingdom as to purchases of both food and the terribly needed supply of clothing, and although we have had, indirectly, advice that the Treasury intend to cover our present overdraft with the Banque Belge, no credits have actually been given us nor has any arrangement been made for the further carrying on of the work. In accordance then, with the indications of the Prime Minister's telegram, will you not be good enough to advise what steps may be taken to bring the question to a definite conclusion.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 179

Letter, FINANCIAL AGENT OF FRENCH GOVERNMENT, LONDON, TO POLAND, *advising that the funds at his disposal do not permit the payment to the Commission of $1,000,000 as authorized by his Government*

LONDON, 28 December 1917

DEAR MR. POLAND:

After having received your letter of the 17th instant, I saw Monsieur Chevrillon, to whom I explained verbally the difficulties

which prevented my giving satisfaction to your demand. I expected to meet him again but was not able to get in touch with him.

In spite of my lively desire to help you under these terrible circumstances, and in spite of receiving the authorization given to me by Monsieur the Financial Minister to pay you £1,000,000 (one million pounds), to my great regret I find it impossible to advance to you even for two or three days the sum which is necessary to you. The end of the year is indeed burdened with such heavy payments that cannot be deferred and which will leave no margin to the sums at my disposal.

Believe me, dear Mr. Poland, with many regrets and my distinguished sentiments,

(Signed) F. Avenol

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 180

Letter, British Treasury to the Belgian Minister in London, *stating that £750,000*[43] *has been set aside for the use of the Commission*

Treasury Chambers, London
2 January 1918

To His Excellency Baron Moncheur,
Belgian Minister in London

Your Excellency:

In reply to your letter of the 31st ultimo (No. 11366), I am directed by the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury to inform you that They are causing the sum of £750,000 to be transferred to the credit of the account of the Belgian Government at the Bank of England on the 2d inst.

I am to explain that Their Lordships have not hitherto had direct financial relations with the Commission for Relief in Belgium; any sums which the Commission has received from British funds have been advanced by Their Lordships as part of Their loans to the Belgian Government who have in turn made payments to the Commission. My Lords would prefer to continue this arrangement and They have therefore given directions for the above sum to be transferred to the credit of your Government instead of the Commission for Relief in Belgium as requested by you.

I am,
Your Excellency,
Your obedient Servant

(Signed) John Bradbury

[43] This sum was advanced specifically to discharge the Commission's excessive overdraft at its London bank, but no indications of future action were given.

DOCUMENT NO. 181

Extract of letter, POLAND TO HOOVER, *concerning the financial embarrassment of the Commission in Europe and informing him that the Foreign Office was at that moment reconsidering the whole matter*

LONDON, 2 January 1918

Herbert Hoover, Washington

MY DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I am sending you attached financial correspondence which may be of interest and value to you in keeping you thoroughly posted as to just what we have been doing over here. This begins where our last communication ended and carries up to date. The extraordinary situation through which we have been going is perfectly harrowing and we are never quite sure whether we ought to continue our attitude of courtesy or kick and cuff. However, we are keeping in touch with Mr. Page on the general lines and believe that up to the present time it has been proper to be somewhat restrained in our attitude, recognizing the enormous difficulties that all governments have to face in these times; but I must say that almost all the sweet Christian spirit has been lost by representatives of the Commission in London, and we believe that forbearance has nearly ceased to be a virtue. In reply to a demand for a personal interview with Lord Robert Cecil, today his secretary advised that the Foreign Office was again considering the whole position and would probably call upon me for an interview later in the day. Before this letter has reached you, undoubtedly the matter will have been settled in some way. . . . .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 182

Memorandum, from FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO POLAND, *giving agreement of British, French, and Belgian Governments regarding the handling of C.R.B. European purchases and expenditures*

LONDON, 5 January 1918

The French Government has just informed Mr. Paul Cambon that in the course of a meeting held in Paris the 2d January, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Van de Vyvere, and Mr. Sergent, after having examined how the C.R.B. could be put in a position to pay the expenses in Europe, agreed on the following arrangement:

The amount of the European expenses, the monthly amount of which is limited provisionally to the maximum of one million five hundred thousand pounds, will be borne as to one-third by the

French Government. The other two-thirds will be advanced in equal parts to the Belgian Government by each of the Governments British and French.

The contract of expenses will be centralized in the Commission de Ravitaillement, London. The expenses approved by the representatives of the French and English Treasuries alone will be provided from the advances of the two Governments. These approvals will be subordinated to the observation of the following conditions:

1. No purchase of raw materials or goods which it is possible to procure in the United States will be provided for from the above indicated advances;

2. Authorization for purchase in neutral countries where the exchange is difficult will not necessarily be accorded and will depend on the financial situation of the moment;

3. The rations of foodstuffs and clothing may be submitted to a revision after arrangement between the French and British Governments, according to circumstances, and following notices which may be given by the Minister of Blockade;

4. To fix the total of purchases, the possibilities of revictualment and tonnage of the Allies as a whole will be taken into account.

The agreement takes effect from January 1918. If it should be proved that the provisional limit of one million five hundred thousand pounds per month is insufficient, the question of the monthly figure will be officially re-examined.

During the meeting there was an exchange of remarks, which should be considered as a complement to this agreement:

It was understood that the C.R.B. should attempt in Holland the realization of a loan destined for the payment of the expenses it incurs there. This negotiation would be independent of that which the Allies are pursuing with a similar object, and would have priority over that of the Allies. The C.R.B. will be authorized in its negotiations to offer the guarantee of the two Governments. Mr. Bonar Law, who, before giving the British guarantee, had expressed the wish that the Government of the United States should add theirs, has withdrawn this previous reservation and has declared himself as disposed to give every facility to the C.R.B. to conclude a loan in Holland.

The French Government would be happy to see the British Government take measures without delay for the putting into execution of this agreement. It would be advisable particularly to authorize the Belgian Government to take from its advances the sum of £500,000 sterling referring to the month of January.

The British Government should also inform Mr. Poland of its favorable views regarding the proposed operation in Holland, concerning which it would be good for the representative of the C.R.B. to immediately commence negotiations. The French Government has already promised its guarantee as far as it is concerned.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 183

Memorandum of meeting, MAJOR MONFRIES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY OF THE C.I.R., AND POLAND AND SHALER OF THE C.R.B., *on relations of C.R.B. and C.I.R.*

LONDON, 1 February 1918.

The object of the meeting was to clearly define the understanding of the C.I.R. as to the application of the measures of control of C.R.B. operations outlined at the joint meeting, Paris, on January 2d, between representatives of the British Treasury, the French Ministry of Finance, the Belgian Minister of Finance, and Mr. O. T. Crosby, Assistant Secretary of the United States Treasury.

Operations in the United Kingdom.—Major Monfries stated that the operation would be that, in accordance with the approved programme, requisition would be made on the C.I.R. for such commodities as would be furnished from the United Kingdom. These might cover individual requisitions or monthly programmes. Possibly this might be extended to cover periods of three months. The orders would then be submitted to the various British Heads of Departments, who would fill these orders if practicable or refuse them. In case they were filled, the commodities would be turned over to the Commission at designated points and the various Departments would reimburse themselves by drafts on the Treasury, which would in turn be charged against the monthly subsidies of the Belgian and French Governments in the agreed proportion of approximately one-third to England and two-thirds to France. Statements covering the charges would be submitted to the C.R.B. monthly or from time to time by each of the Departments separately.

Existing contracts would be considered as definite commitments and would be provided for.

Charters.—It is the understanding of the C.I.R. that when neutral charters are offered to the Relief they will be referred to the Inter-Allied Chartering Board[44] (either direct or through the C.I.R.), who in case it is possible to arrange the charters will make to the C.R.B. the proper notification, or otherwise would advise them of the impossibility of making the charters, and in this case would endeavour to make other shipping arrangements. The owners would be paid direct by the Department of Ship Control, who would draw against the Treasury as in case of purchases, submitting to the Commission statements of expense.

It was stated that the Commission would no longer be allowed to arrange for its own Cross-Channel shipments, but such charters would be handled in the same manner as the neutral charters above. Existing charters would be considered as definite commitments, and would be provided for.

London Overhead Administration Disbursements.—It was outlined that a general statement was to be submitted by the Commission to the C.I.R. monthly of C.R.B. financial requirements of this charac-

[44] A subcommittee of the Allied Maritime Transport Council.

ter, whereupon it is the understanding of the C.I.R. that the necessary funds will be put at the disposal of the C.R.B. by the Treasury, probably by credits arranged through the Belgian Government. The disbursements of the C.R.B. to be made in the usual manner.

Operations in Holland.—The understanding is that the general programme of purchases and financial requirements for each month will first be approved by being submitted to the C.I.R. After this the operations will be carried out as at present by the Rotterdam office of the C.R.B.

In case it is possible to arrange a Relief Loan all the operations will be exactly as at present within the limits of the authorized monthly program. In case such loan cannot be arranged, the various departments of the British Government must be called upon to arrange guilder credits in order that the operations may continue.

As to the present situation, there being outstanding liabilities in excess of the funds in hand, a general statement is to be at once submitted to the C.I.R., which promises to arrange for funds to meet the commitments and to prevent the interruption of operations without the necessity of overdrafts.

It was understood that a general financial programme for Holland should be submitted monthly. It was stated by the representatives of the C.R.B. that owing to the requirements of their accountancy vs. the Belgian and French Governments, it would be much more desirable to have the same procedure followed that has been in force up to the present time, to wit, that all subsidies should be paid over to the Commission in monthly instalments and as necessary, disbursements should be made to the various departments by the C.R.B. itself. However, the outline of Major Monfries as above would be carefully gone into to see whether under it the C.R.B. will be able to carry out its obligations to the Belgian and French Governments.

DOCUMENT NO. 184

Letter, Hoover to Secretary McAdoo, *stating increased financial requirements of Commission for rehabilitation of Belgium, of which the President has approved*

Washington, 13 November 1918

Hon. William G. McAdoo,
Secretary of the Treasury

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Belgian Relief

You will please find enclosed herewith copy of the letter of instructions sent to me by the President, and I am informed by him that he has transmitted to the various departments the necessary directions as to solution of this problem. I am addressing you on some matters of organization separately.

In accordance with the approval of the President at today's conference, I beg to confirm that the Treasury will increase advances for food and clothing to the Relief through the Belgian Government up to a maximum of $20,000,000 per month and to make such provisions as would give three months' notice before termination of this arrangement.

The immediate necessities of Belgium in my view are absolutely essential military measures. This population must be maintained or it will become an impediment to future military action by the Allies if this should prove necessary.

The undernourished condition of the population necessitates an immediate increase in its food program, and this is more especially emphasized by the denudation of the country of such stocks of foods as remained in the country from last harvest by the retreating German Army.

In order to provide food there will be required an expenditure of $17,000,000 a month for purchases in the United States, until such a time as conditions return to normal. Further than this, the population has had no textiles for four years except secondhand clothing, and immediate steps must be taken to provide clothing or raw material for its manufacture. In this matter we need to expend a total of about $20,000,000 spread over perhaps three months, and in this we can probably relieve the Quartermaster of certain stores. Altogether, it appears to me that it will be necessary to provide from the United States Government at least a sum of $20,000,000 per month for purchases plus unspent credits in the United States. In addition to this, I am very hopeful of being able to set up credits in New York from Belgian banks to American banks, which will carry on a considerable program of industrial rehabilitation. Such arrangements, however, to be with the approval of the Treasury.

It is impossible for us to proceed with this great program without assurances from the Treasury that it will be supported, for on sudden cessation the population would starve, and we shall be left suddenly with large orders and commitments that cannot be compassed. It would ordinarily require at least three months to make the necessary changes. I realize the pulls on the Treasury at this time and, to some degree, the difficulties under which the Treasury operates; on the other hand, these measures are vital not only to the maintenance of the state of war, but in the continuance of our future policies in Europe. The advances would obviously need to be made to the Belgian Government through the Belgian Minister, and he is presenting a program of this order.

I believe that the Belgian Government should provide for the funds from other quarters for transportation and distribution of this program, and Mr. Davis and I will endeavor to insist upon this provision in Europe.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

Chapter V

SHIPS

The procurement of ships in which to transport food was no less important than the procurement of funds with which to buy it. And more than any other department of the C.R.B.'s activities shipping was directly affected by the course of military events. Shipping problems began in the last days of October 1914, when Hoover secured, not without difficulty, British permits for the dispatch of the "Iris" and "Coblenz" from London to Rotterdam; they continued in growing complexity until five months before the Armistice in 1918, when the Allies and the United States authorities having decided to regard relief as a "war measure," agreed to furnish sufficient tonnage for the needs of the work. No question -- unless it were finance — was more persistently difficult than ships, and none was more vital to Belgian relief.

As is well known the shortage of ships very nearly caused the Allies to lose the war. The great crisis did not come until 1917, but long before that time the mounting needs of the Allies and the steadily diminishing tonnage available were reflected in the troubles of the C.R.B. These troubles, which shippers everywhere experienced to a greater or less degree, were augmented for the Commission because its tonnage requirements were so great and because its ships, to reach their destination at Rotterdam, had to cross the narrow seas where the naval war, carried on largely under water, was most intense. The hazards of mine and submarine were great, and owners, reasonably enough, preferred to employ their ships elsewhere on equally profitable and less dangerous voyages. Moreover, since the C.R.B. ships crossed and recrossed both the British and German blockade lines, complicated regulations were established and frequently revised by the blockade officials. Notable among these requirements were: the C.R.B. flag; special markings; safe-conduct passes; and special sailing routes.

The first phase of the shipping story concerns British and German permits, regulations, and guarantees and successful efforts of the Commission to secure immunity to non-neutral vessels under its flag. The second, the effects of the German

"War Zone" decree of 1915. The third, Hoover's various projects in 1915–16 to secure ships for relief service, i.e., the use of interned German ships; the employment of United States naval colliers; negotiations leading to the acquisition by the Commission of ships under the Belgian flag as an inadequate but permanent relief fleet, and the plans to purchase additional vessels. Then came the great crisis: the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, its disastrous effects on relief shipping, and Hoover's and Poland's efforts in America and London to prevent drastic curtailment of the C.R.B. requirements, and finally, the successful negotiations with Allied and American authorities in 1918 for the provision of sufficient ships for relief.

1. *The C.R.B. Flag. November–December 1914*

On the 20th October 1914 the British Foreign Office informed Ambassador Page[1] that the Government was not stopping the shipment of food supplies for the civil population of Belgium from *neutral* countries in *neutral* ships. This negative and limited acquiescence to the penetration of the blockade quickly proved inadequate to the needs of the Commission, which aimed at the necessary program of 80,000 tons of provisions each month calling for the employment of forty ocean steamers under continuous charter. There was no huge volume of neutral shipping, and that procurable was extremely expensive. Hoover, recognizing that transportation was a major problem, at once approached the British Foreign Office for further concessions. On the 5th November 1914 he asked Sir Edward Grey[2] to give special privileges to relief cargoes, and suggested that the real solution to the shipping troubles was to permit the Commission to charter ships flying the British flag. In addition to his request for permission to use *non-neutral* vessels in the relief service Hoover asked that Government Insurance[3] be made available for British ships in the C.R.B. ser-

[1] See chapter i, Document 12.

[2] See chapter iv, Document 117.

[3] As an encouragement to shipowners the British Government had set up and financed a War Risk Bureau through which ships were insured at small cost. This insurance specifically excluded the risk of crossing the North Sea, and, in fact, the British took no steps to encourage this trade.

vice. As far as the Commission was concerned these two concessions were closely connected as owners would not charter their vessels to make the hazardous passage across the North Sea to Rotterdam without this insurance.

Before granting these concessions the British demanded further guarantees from the German Government not to interfere with any ships in the Commission's service. This assurance the Germans promptly gave. Out of these negotiations came the Commission's own flag on the seas, the special markings of its vessels, and the rigid system of British and German safe-conduct passes for each relief voyage.

DOCUMENT NO. 185

Letter, Hoover to Percy, *regarding British safe-conduct passes for C.R.B. ships*

London, 8 November 1914

Lord Eustace Percy, Foreign Office, London

Dear Lord Percy:

Presuming on your kind offer to give us occasional advice in our struggles I should be glad to know if it would be a possible thing for us to approach the Foreign Office through the proper channels to obtain the following scheme, viz.: that some kind of document should be issued by the Foreign Office which would serve as a pass for our complete cargoes consigned to the Commission for Relief in Belgium care of the American and/or Spanish Ministers, Rotterdam; these passes to be sent by us to the ports where we have ships being despatched and to be there viséd by the British Consul and to be attached to the bill of lading and taken up with the bill of lading when the ship arrives. Such a document asking immunity from all British Naval Authorities would be of great encouragement to the people who are contributing free gift ships—as there is some alarm in their minds that the ships may be lost.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover

DOCUMENT NO. 186

Memorandum, by Hoover, *concerning British Government insurance for C.R.B. ships*

London, 10 November 1914

Had a discussion with Ambassador Page in the matter of the statement by Sir Edward Grey on the question of the British Government insuring the ships of this Commission, Sir Edward having made

FOREIGN OFFICE,
March 8th, 1915.

Dear Mr. Hoover:-

I understand that you would like an assurance that your flag and the distinctive markings used by the ships chartered by you on their voyages to Rotterdam.

Though any such assurance is of course superfluous, I shall be glad to give it you. Neither your flag - i.e. the words "Commission for Relief in Belgium" painted on a white ground - nor the markings you have adopted - i.e. the words "Belgian Relief Ship" painted either on the body of the ship or on canvas stretched [illegible] - will be used in any way or for any purpose by any officer of His Majesty's Government. I have no reason to believe that any private shipowner has ever made use of [illegible] your flag for his own purposes, but His Majesty's Government will certainly discourage any such use by every means in their power.

His Majesty's Government will [illegible] the use of your flag and markings in all cases where it is used by your express authority on ships [illegible] goods, and will [illegible] in all other cases.

Yours sincerely
E. Grey.

Letter, 8 March 1915, Sir Edward Grey to Hoover

the statement that the British Government would be a great deal influenced in this matter if the German Government would undertake to interfere in no way with the Commission's shipping. I drafted a cablegram to Mr. Gerard setting out the position to him and asking him to interest himself in securing from the German Government a series of passports for our ships leaving the United States. This cablegram was dispatched through the American Embassy to Mr. Gerard, via Washington.

DOCUMENT NO. 187

"Note Verbale," GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO AMERICAN AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN, *giving consent to the C.R.B. to use non-neutral ships for relief shipments into Rotterdam*

BERLIN, 23 November 1914

TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Department of Foreign Affairs has the honor to reply to the Embassy relative to the "Note Verbale" of November 14th F.O. 1105, that the Imperial Government is entirely in sympathy with the efforts of the American Commission in Brussels, designed to supply food to the population.

For this reason the Imperial Government would consent willingly, at least for the present, reserving the right to revoke this consent should it become necessary, that foodstuffs should be sent to Dutch ports even in other than neutral vessels, and would grant, in such a case, for the use of those foodstuffs, the same guarantee as if the delivery were made in neutral ships.

In order to avoid seizure by German warships, it is recommended that these non-neutral ships be provided with a certificate by the proper American authority in which it shall be declared that these ships carry foodstuffs which are being transported by the American Relief Committee, with the consent of the German Government, to Belgium through Dutch ports for the purpose of feeding the Belgian population. Further, these non-neutral ships should have a passport drawn up in the form given below and issued by the Imperial German Embassy in Washington.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 188

Letter, BRITISH ADMIRALTY TO THE COMMISSION, *giving permission to a British ship with C.R.B. cargo to proceed to Rotterdam, but withholding insurance*

LONDON, 27 November 1914

John Beaver White, Esq.
The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

SIR:

In further reply to your letter of the 25th instant, I am now in a position to inform you that the proposed voyage of the S.S. "Badminton" has been carefully considered.

It has been decided, so far as the Admiralty are concerned, that the vessel may undertake the voyage to Rotterdam, but will not be held covered against War Risks under the Government Insurance scheme.

I feel convinced that you will realize that owing to the inevitable risk which a vessel must run on such a voyage it would be inequitable to expose shipowners, subscribing to a system of mutual insurance, to risk of pecuniary loss on a voyage which the Admiralty cannot recommend.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant

(Signed) RICHARD WEBB
Director of Trade Division

DOCUMENT NO. 189

Circular letter, ADMIRALTY TRADE DIVISION TO BRITISH WAR RISK CLUBS, *suggesting that shipowners decline to carry cargoes to Dutch ports*

ADMIRALTY WAR STAFF, LONDON
2 December 1914

SIR:

Cases are constantly occurring of applications being made by British Shipowners as to the safety or otherwise of the route to Dutch ports.

Quite apart from the safety or otherwise of the routes, it is pointed out that the Admiralty considers it most undesirable that any British vessels should be employed in adding to the already very large supplies of grain, etc., which are flowing into Holland.

As you are aware, the Admiralty do not put an absolute prohibition on such voyage, but merely rule it out of the permissible voyages under the Insurance Scheme.

At the same time, it is hoped that British Shipowners will in future decline to carry any such cargoes, and I should be much obliged if you would circularize the members of your club accordingly.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant

(Signed) RICHARD WEBB
Director of Trade Division

DOCUMENT NO. 190

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *regarding the policy of the Admiralty in connection with shipments to Rotterdam*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
6 December 1914

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have just got your letter and have represented the position strongly to Captain Webb. I think you will now be sure that the

circular[4] referred to matters totally different from the trade in which you are engaged, and that all we now have to do is to make it clear to shipowners that this circular does not supersede or alter in any way the policy expressed in Captain Webb's letters to Mr. White. I will push this matter with all the force I can.

The last paragraph of your letter does not exactly represent what I understand to be the position. The question of the employment of British ships by you, with or without an assurance from the German Government, was received by Sir Edward, together with all the other questions you raised at that interview, for the decision of the Cabinet. Such a decision has never been come to, but I have let this matter drop because you were able to settle the question direct with the Admiralty, who are responsible. The question of *amount of risk involved to British shipping by a voyage to Rotterdam* is one which can be better and more expeditiously settled direct between you and the Admiralty—it is far better in such business matters to deal with the officials concerned direct than with Cabinet Ministers! That is the only question which the Admiralty have to decide; the question of the desirability of facilitating your business in every way which is compatible with the interests of the people of this country has already been settled long ago by the Cabinet. That decision stands and you must not let the momentary difficulties created by the action of overworked officials at the Admiralty or elsewhere dishearten you. Neither must you feel hurt if I put up to you from time to time the unfounded rumors we hear about what is happening in Belgium. I want to nail lies as they come up, but you mustn't take any such enquiry as indicating that our sympathy with you in your work is slackening in any way. Whatever appearances may be, please accept my word of honour that we only desire to help, not to interfere.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 191

Letter, ADMIRALTY TRADE DIVISION TO HOOVER, *concerning C.R.B. ships for Rotterdam, enclosing second circular letter to War Risk Clubs*

ADMIRALTY WAR STAFF, LONDON
7 December 1914

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Lord Eustace Percy has told me of your letter to him concerning trade to Rotterdam, and in this connection I beg to enclose copy of letter which has been sent to the War Risk Clubs in regard to the vessels which you are proposing specially to charter to take foodstuffs for the Belgian refugees.

I need hardly point out that the circular asking British shipowners

[4] See Document 189.

not to trade to Holland was in no way intended to hamper the work of your Commission, but was dictated by other considerations in connection with the war in which Great Britain is engaged.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) RICHARD WEBB
Director of Trade Division

TO BRITISH WAR RISK CLUBS:

In reference to my letter of the 2d instant, respecting voyages of British vessels to Dutch ports, I beg to state that the desire expressed therein was not intended to apply to ships carrying supplies for the Belgian Relief Commission.

The Admiralty, while unable to allow such voyages to be made under cover of the Government Insurance Scheme, are anxious not to hinder the work of the Relief Commission.

Will you be good enough to inform those members of the London group of War Risk Associations who are concerned in the matter.

The list of vessels probably chartered for this purpose is attached.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant

(Signed) RICHARD WEBB
Director of Trade Division

DOCUMENT NO. 192

Extract of letter, HOOVER TO RUNCIMAN, *requesting extension of British Government insurance to cover C.R.B. ships to Rotterdam*

LONDON, 10 December 1914

The Right Honorable Walter Runciman, M.P.
Board of Trade, London

. . . . . .

The second matter is one of great importance to us—and that is the question of British Government Insurance on cargoes and vessels going to Rotterdam for our purpose.

Although the circular issued by the Trade Division of the Admiralty to British owners suggesting that they should refrain from going to Rotterdam was amended to the extent that the wishes of the Government did not extend to our ships, the amended circular stated that the British Government Insurance would not apply.

It appears that it had been the impression of the Protective Clubs that British Government Insurance did apply to their ships engaged on this mission and the owners with whom we now have charters are compelled to take out independent insurance at Lloyd's. Furthermore, the moral effect upon the shipping world has been so great as to make it almost impossible for us to secure ships at all at any price. The rates have been advanced in an extraordinary manner

for Rotterdam, and this combined with the insurance put upon us bids fair to cost us something like £30,000 to £40,000 extra over what could be done if the British Government Insurance applied to our ships as far as Rotterdam.

I have taken the matter up with the Belgian Government and they have agreed that they will undertake to guarantee the British Government against any loss which might be incurred on that section of the voyage from British waters to Rotterdam and return, and I understand they are prepared to do this without receiving any proportion of the premium, so that if the British Government could see its way to extend the Government Insurance to all our vessels to Rotterdam the effect would not only be actual in facilitating insurance but would be of the greatest moral and material benefit to us in inducing the British shipowners to give us their help.

Some time since, in an interview with Sir Edward Grey, he suggested that if an undertaking could be obtained from the German Government that ships engaged on our work would not be interfered with, it might facilitate the views of the British Government as to the extension of insurance, although he could give no undertaking in the matter. We have obtained this assurance from the German Government so that so far as the risk extends to naval action, that has been eliminated not only for the portion of the voyage from British waters to Rotterdam but also throughout the ship's whole voyage, thus to some extent possibly reducing the total risk.

I would therefore greatly appreciate it if you could reconsider the whole insurance question and see if the Government could manage to meet our difficulty to this extent. As you are perhaps aware, we had originally hoped to receive some subsidy from the British Government in this work, but I understand that the Government is not inclined to participate to this extent, and you can quite readily appreciate our anxiety to reduce expenditure at any point so that such funds as we have may produce the maximum results in the way of foodstuffs introduced to the civil population in Belgium. Such a concession as the above would not represent any direct outlay on the part of the Government but would represent to us a material subsidy.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover

DOCUMENT NO. 193

Letter, Hoover to Runciman, *concerning the benefits of the Government War Risk Insurance to C.R.B. ships*

London, 21 December 1914

The Right Honorable Walter Runciman, M.P.
Board of Trade, London

Dear Mr. Runciman:

We beg to acknowledge the receipt of your valued favor of the 19th instant.

It is quite right that the ships that I wrote you about on the 10th

instant are conveying only foodstuffs for the relief of the civil population of Belgium, all of which are shipped and distributed under the auspices of this Commission. Such being the case we understand from your letter that your Board will give such ships the benefit of the Government War Risk Insurance Scheme, and we will therefore be obliged if you will be good enough to notify the Shipowners Protective Associations so that the matter will be made clear to all concerned. We have received from the Admiralty general consent for the steamers proceeding and they have advised that they will give special consent for each ship if required.

We thank you most sincerely for what you have done for us in this matter.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 194

Telegram, PAGE TO U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE, *regarding ships with whole cargoes for Belgian relief*

LONDON, 28 December 1914

SECRETARY OF STATE, WASHINGTON

The Foreign Office informs me that the British naval authorities will undertake in the future to facilitate the voyage only of such charity ships to Rotterdam as contain whole cargoes of food for Belgian relief. It is important therefore that such ships should not contain other cargo, and to secure this protection all ships for Belgian relief must be reported by Lindon Bates, the Commission's representative in New York, to the British Ambassador in Washington. After conferring with Sir Cecil Spring Rice it might be advantageous to give this arrangement wide publicity because certain societies and committees continue to ship contributions of food on ships that carry other cargo.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, LONDON

DOCUMENT NO. 195

Example of statement required of masters of ships using the C.R.B. flag

ROTTERDAM, 27 January 1915

I undersigned, *J. Hutcheon,* Master of the British Steamer "Polvarth," do hereby solemnly promise and declare *not* to use the flag entrusted to me by *The Commission for Relief in Belgium* for any purpose whereby any of the belligerent nations have an advantage.

I further promise *not to take any cargo on my homeward trip,* whilst flying the Commission's flag, and undertake to deliver this flag immediately on arrival at the first port of call in the U.K.

(Signed) J. HUTCHEON, *Master*

DOCUMENT NO. 196

"Note Verbale," GERMAN FOREIGN OFFICE TO AMERICAN AMBASSADOR AT BERLIN, *stating certification required for non-neutral ships carrying C.R.B. cargoes*

BERLIN, 24 December 1914

TO THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, BERLIN

In supplement of its "Note Verbale" of 23d November 1914, No. II WK Be 179, relative to the supply of food for the population of Belgium, the Foreign Office has the honor to inform the Embassy of the United States of America that it appears desirable that the following statements should be included in the certificates with which non-neutral vessels are to be provided:

a) The express declaration:

1. That the ship contains solely food (and clothing) for the population of Belgium to be unloaded in a Dutch port;
2. An undertaking of the master of the vessel on his word of honor to abstain from any and all actions on the outward or return voyage, involving assistance to our opponents.

b) It is further desired that the following should be pointed out in the certificates:

3. That certificate and pass are valid only for the single *outward* voyage, and are to be delivered to the German Consul upon arrival at the Dutch port of destination, or to the German Minister at The Hague if there is no such consul. Similar papers for the return voyage will be issued by the Imperial German Legation at The Hague;
4. That the papers do not bar a search of the vessel and the cargo must be stowed so that search can be conducted quickly and easily;
5. That the date of departure from the United States is to be communicated to the Imperial German Ambassador at Washington, the date of departure from the Netherlands on the return voyage is to be communicated to the Imperial German Minister at The Hague;
6. That an offence against these provisions or against the obligations assumed works forfeiture of all rights to preferential treatment.

The Foreign Office begs to request the Embassy of the United States of America to be good enough to take the necessary steps in order that the certificates may be worded in accordance with what has been stated above.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 197

Copy of German safe-conduct pass issued to ships used by the C.R.B.

The undersigned Imperial Minister hereby certifies on the strength of the arrangement concluded between the Imperial Government and the Government of the United States of America that the

British Steamer "John Hardie"
Master *James Walker*

has on board exclusively goods of the American Commission for Relief in Belgium intended for the suffering civil population in Belgium.

1. It is valid only for the present homeward voyage via Cardiff or Barry and must be delivered immediately upon arrival in an American port to the local Imperial German General-Consul or to the Imperial German Ambassador at Washington.
2. The Master has undertaken upon his word of honor to abstain during the outward and return voyages from any or all actions that may involve assistance to Germany's enemies.
3. Vessels of the Imperial Navy have the right to search the ship.
4. In case of non-compliance with the above conditions the ships lose all right to preferential treatment.

THE HAGUE, February 6th, 1915

The German Minister
(Signed) VON MUELLER

2. *The German "War Zone" of 1915. February–April 1915*

The German "War Zone" specified in the declaration of the 4th February 1915 included all the waters surrounding Great Britain and Ireland and the English Channel. After the 18th February every enemy merchant ship met in these waters was to be destroyed and neutrals were warned that it might not be possible to prevent attacks on their ships since the British were alleged to be using neutral flags. Although paragraph 6 of the German Admiralty's instructions of the 18th February 1915 to U-boat commanders provided that the Commission's ships should be spared, the C.R.B. was advised to direct its vessels to avoid the war zone and to follow a course designated by the German Admiralty around the north of Scotland and thence down the eastern part of the North Sea and through a lane twenty miles wide along the Dutch coast. For many reasons, not unknown to the German Government, it was impossible for the Commission to follow the German stipulations and maintain the

program of imports into Belgium. Some of these reasons are given in the following documents.

The Commission's oversea purchases came largely from North America where the vessels were supplied with German safe-conducts at the time of departure. Important supplements to these shipments were cargoes of maize from South America and of rice from India. Following the trade custom the Commission bought many of these cargoes afloat as they were en route to England. The vessels with these cargoes could not be ordered to Rotterdam without entering the war zone since the British required that all relief cargoes which included those from North America report at a British port for Admiralty inspection. Moreover these vessels had to be furnished with a German safe-conduct which could not be provided if the vessels did not put in at a British port. The Commission also bought large quantities of supplies in the London market and shipped these in small cross-channel boats which had to traverse the war zone to reach Rotterdam. All these vessels, after discharging at Rotterdam and receiving a new German safe-conduct, were obliged to put in at some British port for bunker coal, thus braving the war zone again. It was not until April 1915 that the German Government, as a result of Hoover's energetic protests, agreed to permit relief steamers to call at British ports and to cross the English Channel immune from attack. In the meantime the relief steamer "Harpalyce," outward bound in ballast from Rotterdam, was torpedoed in the North Sea.

DOCUMENT NO. 198

Letter, German Embassy, Washington, to C.R.B., New York, *recommending that in view of the German "war zone" declaration, C.R.B. ships take the northern route to Rotterdam*

German Embassy, Washington
15 February 1915

Lindon W. Bates, Esq., New York City

Dear Mr. Bates,

With reference to the recent declaration of a war zone around the English coast I beg to draw your attention to the fact that, though of course the German commanders will do their best to avoid any mistake, *every* ship entering the war zone will be in danger. Also the letters of safe-conduct which this Embassy gives to the relief ships

will not remove this danger as an examination of these papers by submarines will probably not be feasible inside the war zone. I can therefore only very strongly recommend that the relief ships take the course north of Scotland indicated by the German Admiralty.

Yours very truly

(Signed) E. v. HANIEL

DOCUMENT NO. 199

Telegram, HOOVER TO C.R.B., NEW YORK, *protesting against German requirements that C.R.B. ships take northern route*

LONDON, 17 February 1915

RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

Please inform German Ambassador our British Admiralty and Board of Trade regulations and all our charter parties require all our ships call Falmouth for orders and necessitate proceeding direct Rotterdam through Straits, otherwise all charter parties break down and will be impossible enforce delivery. Last Monday in Berlin I discussed matter with Secretary Foreign Affairs who assured me as ships are marked and can cross Channel in daylight Germans would give instructions they not be interfered with in accordance their previous undertaking with us. Unless we can proceed as usual route entire supply to Belgium will break down.[5]

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 200

Telegram, C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, TO HOOVER, *advising that German Minister at The Hague refuses safe-conduct passes except to Relief vessels returning direct to America via northern route*

ROTTERDAM, 25 February 1915

HOOVER, LONDON

We have just been advised by local German Consul that German Ambassador Hague refuses to give return passes to steamers employed by our Commission, except those holding papers from American ports, and these passes are only good for return via northern route. German Consul unable advise at what port steamer can call in England when proceeding by northern route. Have taken up with American Legation Hague, and they are now asking for definite statement from German Minister there, and will also take up with Gerard in Berlin. German Legation Hague refuses any kind of pass on steamers purchased en route. Are you guaranteeing safe return of all steamers from Rotterdam to United Kingdom ports? Will advise

[5] Count Bernstorff immediately replied, "If German Secretary of State gives this information it will be all right."

result of Hague negotiations as soon as possible. Three steamers have left Rotterdam for England without passes but are using Commission flag, namely: "Treneglos," "Ariel," "Rockabill."

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 201

Telegram, HOOVER TO C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, *protesting against German regulations outlined in preceding document*

LONDON, 26 February 1915

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

Please telegraph Whitlock and Gerard fully result your negotiations and also forward each of them following telegram from me and I am sending it direct to Van Dyke. Begins: Utterly impossible for us to procure sufficient food supplies for Belgium exclusively from North American ports and are therefore compelled to buy floating cargoes and to engage foodstuffs from other quarters of the world, some of which are transshipped from British ports. Furthermore utterly impossible for us to deliver one pound of foodstuff in Rotterdam if ships required to go or come north of British Islands as shipping cannot be engaged under this condition, and unless German Government is prepared to give instructions that the markings on our ships, which are visible for miles, and our flag, are to be respected in the passage of ships to and from British ports to Rotterdam engaged solely on our work, the whole business becomes absolutely hopeless. No ships will use our markings unless on our mission. We are only securing the passage of these ships by virtue of the insistence on our part that our flag will be respected under the agreements which we have with the German Government and the assurances given to me personally by His Excellency von Jagow, and if the German Government is no longer prepared to respect our flag and their undertakings to us it appears to us that our efforts must come to an end. I cannot believe that there is any intention on the part of the German Government to otherwise than assist in every way in their power this humanitarian effort. Ends.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 202

Letter, VON JAGOW TO GERARD, *granting permission to C.R.B. ships to use the Channel route*

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
5 March 1915

MY DEAR EXCELLENCY:

Many thanks for your kind letter of the 1st instant enclosing a copy of the telegram of Mr. Hoover. Herr von Bethmann Hollweg and I retain the most pleasing remembrance of Mr. Hoover and both

he and Your Excellency may rest assured that the Imperial Government maintains its former attitude to afford the humanitarian work of the Relief Commission on the part of Germany every possible support.

We had also been informed of Mr. Hoover's anxiety through our Legation at The Hague, and I had thereupon ascertained at once through the Imperial Admiralty that ships of the Relief Commission should also proceed undisturbed by the English Channel route provided that they be recognizable by the customary insignia, which should also be illuminated so as to be plainly visible at night. The German submarines have been instructed accordingly. Herr von Mueller at The Hague will in the meantime have advised Mr. Hoover of this fact through the American Minister at The Hague.

In this connection we must naturally assume that all means will be taken to exclude the possibility of a misuse of the insignia of the Relief Commission. To this end the Imperial Foreign Office will invoke again in an official communication the kind mediation of Your Excellency to obtain from the British Government a declaration containing the assurance that only those ships that are actually in the service of the Relief Commission may carry the insignia of the Commission.

As Your Excellency will easily understand, we were unable, in view of the existing danger from mines in the war zone, to refrain from declining to issue safe-conducts to the ships of the Commission for the journey to and from England. On the other hand, we will gladly issue safe-conducts, as heretofore, to those ships of the Commission which do not touch at English points, and at the same time urgently recommend them, precisely on account of the danger from mines, to choose the northern route around Scotland indicated in the "Nachrichten für Seefahrer," No. 3161, 1914.

We believe that in this manner all the wishes of the Relief Commission, whose efforts cannot too highly be appreciated, have been met as regards sea traffic.

I am happy to avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

(Signed) VON JAGOW

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 203

Telegram, PAGE TO GERARD, *protesting against German refusal to grant passes to British ports*

LONDON, 18 April 1915

AMBASSADOR GERARD, BERLIN

The refusal German Minister Hague to issue safe-conduct passes to relief ships from Rotterdam to British ports amounts in effect to withdrawal of German undertaking not to interfere with ships en-

gaged in this humanitarian task and whole problem this shipping needs renewed understanding with German Government. In order to get matters clear they should understand: first, that while relief cargoes from America bear safe-conduct to Rotterdam from German Ambassador, yet they are compelled to call at Falmouth to secure permission from British Admiralty to proceed, thus are compelled touch British ports; second, owing high prices American food supplies, nearly one-half relief cargoes are now River Plate and Indian cargoes bought afloat, which come into Falmouth for orders and only at this point come under control Commission, and at Falmouth they receive Commission markings and British permit to proceed, therefore the Commission should be supplied from The Hague with German safe-conduct passes which they can hand to captains at Falmouth to carry them to Rotterdam; third, practically all the Commission's ships are engaged for only one single voyage, and ships leave Commission's service not when they have discharged at Rotterdam but when they have returned in ballast to their next loading port, which is almost universally United Kingdom; also even when engaged for second voyage they must under British orders call at United Kingdom port and in any event usually must do so for coal. Commission totally unable induce ships go Rotterdam unless they can assure them safe-conduct return.

In conclusion Commission must have right to secure from German Minister Hague, upon application and usual declarations undertakings and markings safe-conduct passes from United Kingdom ports to Rotterdam and likewise on application at Hague must receive passes for ships from Rotterdam to United Kingdom or other port where she is proceeding in ballast. Otherwise British Admiralty will refuse issue any permits for British ships proceed to Rotterdam and as there are practically only British ships available whole business comes to an end.[6] All these ships carry vivid markings of the Commission and the Commission puts every ship under bond to surrender markings upon reaching destination of her service; moreover British Government has entered widest undertaking not to use and to prevent use these markings for any other purpose than the Commission's work. The whole requires most energetic solution as the irritation growing here over sinking of "Harpalyce" is developing the hand of that party opposed on military grounds to feeding the Belgians; and if German Government is desirous Commission should be able to continue it requires complete agreement by them with these moderate requests and better precautions that Commission's markings shall be respected. Moreover if it develops that sinking "Harpalyce" was done by torpedo in broad daylight without warning while carrying Commission markings and safe-conduct pass it appears that German Government to preserve its good name and faith should take some appropriate action.

PAGE

[6] British authorities had threatened to refuse permits to C.R.B. ships unless the issue of German safe-conduct passes was resumed.

DOCUMENT NO. 204

Extract of telegram, C.R.B. Rotterdam to Hoover, *reporting refusal of German Minister at The Hague to grant safe-conduct passes to C.R.B. ships touching England for coal or otherwise*

Rotterdam, 16 April 1915

Hoover, London

German Embassy Hague has refused to issue safe-conduct passes to any ships touching England for coal or otherwise. German Embassy states that they only agreed issue safe-conduct passes back direct to America. White seeing Legation today and will wire further details later. First ship refused is "Dowgate," who have put responsibility up to us. . . . .

Relief Commission

DOCUMENT NO. 205

Extract of Telegram, Hoover to White, C.R.B. Rotterdam, *quoting message sent to Washington urging the President to press German Government to resume issue of passes to C.R.B. ships*

London, 16 April 1915

John White
Relief Commission, Rotterdam

Have asked Page telegraph Washington following import tonight:

"Commission informs me German Minister at Hague refuses grant further safe-conduct passes ships unless they proceed direct United States for further cargoes for Commission without calling at United Kingdom ports. This is direct contravention of original undertakings to safe-conduct all Commission ships whether going or coming Rotterdam. Most their ships chartered for single voyage and return and leave service of Commission when they have returned in ballast to United Kingdom port after discharging cargo in Rotterdam. In any event all ships which intend make second voyage on behalf Commission must call English port for coal. This gross violation agreements may make work impossible particularly as insurance and charters are undertaken in cognizance of agreement of non-interference. While it is possible they can secure continued service by offering extra payment and cash guarantees it makes their already overtaxed funds totally inadequate as they have today sixty large ships under charter. In this matter the Germans are not only violating their undertaking but are rendering the work almost impossible as it is nonsense to assume Commission can charter ships go Rotterdam without provision for their return. Doubt arises in minds Commission as to whether Germans endeavoring to break down Commission's work by this action and anxious to know whether or not German Government wishes them discontinue feeding Belgian civil

population. Ask President name humanity and interest ten million noncombatants dependent on Commission for daily bread use his influence through Ambassador Gerard obtain amelioration of this impasse and provide for safety of Commission and people who serve it."

Seems to me Mr. Ballin would be glad assist you in Berlin get this whole pass business straightened out and you could also take up "Harpalyce."[7] If proves to have been torpedoed they should contribute our funds £150,000 as some compensation for increase on insurance rates. War risk concessions are already agitating on this matter of passes and proper attitude of German Government is more importance to us than[8] interned ships unless we could get interned ships out at once and unless the Germans themselves would insure them.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 206

Letter, VON JAGOW TO GERARD, *stating that the German Government had issued instructions to its Minister at The Hague to resume the issue of passes to C.R.B. ships*

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
18 April 1915

EXCELLENCY:

In reply to your two kind communications of 17th April, I would emphasize anew that the philanthropic work of the Relief Commission for Belgium is fully appreciated as far as Germany is concerned, and that every support will gladly be lent it. Accordingly, the German submarines have now been directed to allow the ships of the Relief Commission to proceed unmolested, if they are recognizable by their marks of identification, so that a special letter of safe-conduct would not really be necessary.

However, the Imperial Legation at The Hague has now been authorized by me, by telegraph, to issue to the vessels of the Relief Commission letters of escort not only for the return voyage to America, but also for the trip to England, provided that the ships in question are required by the terms of their charter to return to England and that they take no cargo for England.

For their safety, however, and in order to avoid errors in identification, the ships in question must be strongly urged to carry by day and by night clearly recognizable marks of identification.

[7] S.S. "Harpalyce," C.R.B. ship, outward bound from Rotterdam, was torpedoed in the North Sea in daylight on the 10th April 1915.

[8] Hoover had sent J. B. White of the London Office to Holland to assist in the negotiations for interned German ships for the Commission. See Document 207.

Furthermore, it is to be recommended to the Commission's ships, should they wish to return to America, not to call at English ports solely for the purpose of coaling, but rather to provide themselves with coal at Rotterdam.

To make this possible, we shall gladly lend our assistance that they may be able to purchase German coal in Rotterdam.

I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest respect.

(Signed) VON JAGOW

[*Translation*]

3. *A Relief Fleet. March 1915–May 1917*

By the time the Commission had won the right to use non-neutral ships, a new problem had to be faced. Within a few months after the outbreak of the war the demands of governments and private commerce for ships drove charter rates to unprecedented heights. Obliged to compete in this rising market, the Commission found itself forced to spend an ominously increasing proportion of its inadequate funds for transport instead of supplies. Hoover realized that this condition would get worse rather than better, and in December 1914 he instituted various projects with the object of securing a permanent relief fleet which would make the Commission virtually independent of the market. His first proposal concerned German interned ships.

There were at this time a great many merchant ships flying the German flag which, on the outbreak of the war, in order to escape capture, had taken refuge in neutral ports in various parts of the world. There they had been interned and there they remained. Early in 1915 Hoover had discussed informally with officers of the Hamburg-American line[9] the question of using some of these vessels. According to preliminary discussions of the project a neutral Dutch shipping company was to operate the vessels at low rates for the Commission. As the documents which follow show, Hoover began negotiations with the British Foreign Office on the 13th January[10] and secured British Government approval with many restrictive stipulations. He then received the approval of the German Government and finally com-

[9] See chapter iv, Document 137.

[10] It was not until April 1916 that the plan was dropped.

pleted contracts with actual shipowners under the very difficult conditions imposed. At this point, though the contracts had the support of the British Government (who realized the impending ship shortage), the French Government peremptorily refused to approve the transaction. Months afterward when the French became desperate for shipping they requested the Commission to revive the question, but the German Government on this occasion refused. The failure of the French Government to approve the plan probably cost the Allied Governments hundreds of millions in freight charges before the war was over. The negotiations themselves were spread continuously over sixteen months and bring out many angles of the war mind.

DOCUMENT NO. 207

Letter, GREY TO HOOVER, *concerning conditions under which the British Government would permit the C.R.B. to use German interned ships*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
16 March 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have carefully considered your letter of the 13th January[11] regarding your desire to employ certain German ships now in neutral ports to carry foodstuffs for your Commission.

I enclose a memorandum showing the general conditions on which we should feel obliged to insist in regard to any such transaction. If you can negotiate an arrangement which fulfils these conditions we shall, I think, be able to give you an undertaking to respect these ships in the same way as we now respect the ships employed by you.

The temporary transfer of these ships to a neutral flag would, however, have to form the subject of a special informal arrangement between His Majesty's Government and the neutral Government concerned, before we could consent to its coming into force.

As regards the limit fixed for the payment you are to make to the neutral firm, the object of this limit is of course to secure that the German owners shall at most receive merely a nominal profit on the transaction. It is understood that you will do your best to secure the necessary tonnage at a price as far as possible below that limit, and as near as possible to the minimum which would afford a reasonable profit to the neutral company without leaving any share whatever to the German owners. We feel that you should be able to

Yours sincerely

(Signed) E. GREY

[11] See chapter iv, Document 126.

negotiate on this basis with the German owners, since the latter will benefit to a considerable extent by the mere fact that they are relieved from the heavy upkeep expenses and from the deterioration which must result from the present enforced idleness of these vessels.

Employment of German Ships by the Commission for Relief in Belgium

1. The title to these ships must be transferred to a firm in some neutral country. The transfer must be made in a form which would not normally entitle the ships to a change of register or to fly the flag of the neutral country concerned; and the ships must either revert to the German owners as soon as they cease to be exclusively employed by the Commission, or must in any case be recognised to be liable to be treated as German ships so soon as they cease to be so employed. A special arrangement must be made between His Majesty's Government and the neutral Government concerned by which the ships shall, for the period of their employment, be permitted to fly the neutral flag.

2. These ships shall be operated by, and the entire crew composed of, neutrals.

3. The Commission shall charter the ships from the neutral firm who shall operate them.

4. The Commission shall submit the name of the neutral firm in question to His Majesty's Government before the transaction is finally concluded.

5. The ships shall, after His Majesty's Government have finally approved the transaction and have made the necessary agreement with the neutral Government, be immune from interference on the part of His Majesty's Government to the same extent and in the same way as the ships at present employed by the Commission, so long as they are employed solely and absolutely in carrying foodstuffs on behalf of the Commission, and the Commission shall notify His Majesty's Government immediately it ceases to employ any particular ship.

6. A list of such ships in the employ of the Commission shall be furnished to His Majesty's Government and any change in the list of ships immediately communicated.

7. The Commission shall not pay for more than 4*s*. per ton deadweight per month as charter money to the neutral Company and no other payment outside this sum shall be made by the Commission to the German owners. The Commission shall inform His Majesty's Government of the terms of the whole transaction before it is finally put into force.

DOCUMENT NO. 208

Letter, WHITE TO HOOVER, *concerning negotiations in Berlin with officials of the Hamburg Line and the Royal Dutch Lloyd Line relative to the use of interned German ships*

ROTTERDAM, 17 April 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR HOOVER:

GERMAN INTERNED SHIPS

In connection with the negotiations for the above, Mr. Hulse was in Berlin and saw Mr. Ballin, arranging for a meeting at Amsterdam yesterday with Mr. Loezer, Director of the Hamburg America Line, and Mr. Wilmink, President of the Royal Dutch Lloyd. We enclose, herewith, preliminary contract agreed to at that meeting. This will be subject to some changes at a further meeting which we hope to have as soon as we learn from you whether or not the Royal Dutch Lloyd will be acceptable to the British Government.

The Hamburg Line have vessels in all parts of the world and will be able to supply us with any possible number of vessels we may require.

There may be some difficulty in regard to securing crews. It is proposed to make an arrangement for ten boats as soon as they can be got ready and for more boats to be taken on as fast as crews can be arranged for them and as soon as they can be used by the Commission. Under these conditions it seems to me that it would be a mistake for the moment to take any further charters, especially in view of the very considerable stores now on hand in Belgium and the large tonnage arrivals for next month.

It seems to me that there will unquestionably be complications in regard to the nominal transfer to the Dutch flag of these vessels, and there may be difficulties in getting the agreement of the British Government to the contract on the terms proposed.

In connection with the arranged rate of 4/– per ton, you may be interested in knowing that the idea which the Hamburg America people had when Mr. Hulse was in Berlin was 8/–; they then stated that it would be impossible for them to find anything under 6/–, and Mr. Hulse finally laid on the table an agreement under which we are working with the British Admiralty, from which they were able to see that it was impossible to secure a better price than 4/–. As to whether we shall be able to get under this figure I do not know, but I have the feeling that unless the people here have an opportunity of making some profit out of the business, and that the German owners can at least make a nominal profit, we shall have difficulty in getting the business through.

On account of the sinking of the Dutch boats, the wages of the crews will be largely increased, and in any case it will be very difficult to secure crews at all. In regard to the question of an engineer of the Hamburg American Line of German citizenship above military

age, going as a passenger or supercargo on each vessel, you will understand the wishes of the German owners for this requirement. They would be willing to undertake that this engineer should not be allowed on deck on passing through the English channel or otherwise in accordance with any regulations that it might be necessary for the British Government to make. In the interests of the operation of the boats, it would be desirable to have an engineer who thoroughly understands all the machinery, to be available, and it may be possible that this point will be the one on which our negotiations will fall down, especially if a cut in the price is insisted on. You can understand that if the owners of the vessels can be assured that the machinery will be well looked after, they would be willing to have the vessels operated at a price less than if this point were left uncertain. Director Loezer stated the case of a ship which they had chartered some time ago where their engineers were not in charge and where the machinery of the vessel was badly damaged by an engineer who did not know thoroughly the mechanical working of the boat. You can easily see that an engineer might do more damage in operating boats for several months than any possible profit that could be made out of the figure mentioned in the contract plus the actual cost of keeping the boat lying in port as at the present time.

We believe that the present contract is sufficiently accurate for you to place before the necessary authorities for their approval.

Immediately on hearing from you that the Dutch Lloyd is satisfactory,[12] we shall take the necessary steps here to have them approach the Dutch Government, also to have the matter placed before the Dutch Government by the Legation.

There is another question raised which we shall be obliged if you will take up, by cable, with the Government at Washington or through the office at New York as seems best. This has to do with the sending of the crews to the United States for the vessels now interned there. We understand that the law dealing with the bringing in of neutral crews to join vessels is uncertain, and the Dutch Lloyd would not be willing to go on with the agreement until this point is cleared up. The German crews, or at least the important members of the same, are still at New York or in South American ports, and it is the intention to send out Dutch crews from here to take over the vessels. Under the immigration laws of the United States it is uncertain whether this would be allowed. It seems to us, however, that it should be possible to overcome this point and to get the necessary permission from the authorities in New York or Washington through our New York office, who would probably know the proper authorities to approach in the matter. As this may take some time we think it would be advantageous if they get on with it immediately.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) J. Beaver White

[12] The British Government on the 30th April notified Hoover it had no objection to the Royal Dutch Lloyd.

DOCUMENT NO. 209

Letter, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *asking for the consent of the French Government to the project of use of German interned ships by the C.R.B.*

LONDON, 8 September 1915

L. Chevrillon,[13] *Esq., Paris*

DEAR CHEVRILLON:

I think I informed you from time to time that we were negotiating to try and get the right to use German interned ships for this trade. These negotiations have been going on since last December and we have finally formulated contracts, of which you will find enclosed two copies. The British Government has approved, and has asked for the approval of the other Allies, which I understand they have received with the exception of the French, and the whole matter is now held up at that point.

In a general way the price which we pay for these ships works out at about 40 per cent of the price at which we have to charter ships in the market. It will make a difference of about 4 centimes per kilo in the price of bread in Northern France. Aside from the fact that it will save us from £100,000 to £150,000 a month and thereby decreases the cost of the ravitaillement in Northern France very appreciably, it also has an important bearing from the point of view of the Allies. At the present moment we are the largest shippers outside of governments, and our entrance into the shipping market maintains the price of transatlantic shipping at fully 10 per cent above what it would be if we got out of it, and it affects the price of bread in both England and France in just about that proportion of their transport costs. Under the arrangements made the sums of money going to the Germans for the use of their ships is infinitesimal. Four shillings per ton deadweight on a 5,000 ton ship would represent £1,250 per month, and out of this practically the whole operating expenses of the ship have to be paid, and it is estimated by our shipping experts that the margin over operating expenses will not exceed £500 a month. Of this margin one-half goes to the Dutch firm which operates the ships, and one-half to the Germans, so that on a ship of this size the Germans would only be getting a revenue of £250 a month. They of course have the benefit of being relieved of the cost of maintaining their idle ships, which is the principal thing which has influenced them. They have also been greatly influenced by the humanitarian aspects of the enterprise, and we had strong support from the humanitarian elements in the German Government in our different negotiations with Herr Ballin.

I was wondering if it would be possible for you to stir up the French Foreign Office a little, in view of the above, and see if you could get them to signify their approval to the English Government.

[13] Louis Chevrillon, representative of the C.R.B. in Paris. Hoover called upon him frequently to secure the necessary support of the French Government.

The matter is one of pressing importance as we are having the greatest possible difficulty in securing enough shipping for our work, and, in any event, the freight that we lose represents a considerable sum of money in which the French people are directly interested.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover

DOCUMENT NO. 210

Letter, Chevrillon to Hoover, *outlining the objections of the French Government to the use of German interned ships by the C.R.B.*

Paris, 6 October 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq., President
The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

Dear Hoover:

I have had several long conversations yesterday at the French Foreign Office with the outcome that the ship question is decidedly taking a bad turn. There was a note in the handwriting of Mr. Delcassé himself giving his opinion as inclined to be adverse, and, curiously enough, a very long letter from Mr. Klobukowski, the French Minister to Belgium, very strongly giving his arguments against the proposed combination.

I immediately saw one of the very high officials of the Department, but found that his conviction was also made and strongly opposed to our proposal. A note will be presented to the English Government setting out the objections of the French Government, more or less in the manner formulated by Mr. Klobukowski.

For your information, I will now present the case as set forth in this letter and such as I remember it from having had it read to me rapidly:

"In the first place it is a known fact that the Hamburg-America Company is on the verge of failure and the proposed combination might just save it. The upkeep of the boats in New York[14] is a very considerable expense, of which that Company would be relieved.

"The boats having a neutral crew, many German sympathizers might be employed in the service, which might lead later to deplorable consequences. Also, at the close of hostilities, the boats would be scattered in such a way that many of them would be probably in home waters and therefore in a position to be immediately utilized by Germany to start at once on a career of industrial competition instead of lying in New York until they can be put in service again.

"A further reason is that the hostile press would not fail to say that the German submarine war has been so active and so successful

[14] The U.S. Government agreed (Letter, Lansing to W. H. Page, 6 December 1915) to permit German interned ships to leave American ports.

that the Allies are obliged to take this course as the only temporary remedy to a very grave difficulty.

"Finally, the proposed combination is nothing else but 'dealing with the enemy.' The Allied Governments still consider that the work of the Commission is only tolerated under the plea of humanitarianism. The duty of provisioning and victualing the populations in a territory occupied by German troops is incumbent upon the German Government; the work is performed at the expense of the Allied nations under protest, and the idea of chartering a German fleet, of paying a German company, of relieving it from an enormous expense, of guaranteeing its ships from any attack, of putting them in perfect train for immediate action after the war is over, all this for a service which Germany should perform, cannot for a moment be entertained. No Allied Government could accept such a paradoxical position as that of a German fleet of steamers circulating freely, the only steamers of any of the belligerent governments immune from war risks or capture."

Such will be the reasons presented by the French Government in answer to the English suggestion, and I am afraid that the Foreign Office here will refuse to budge from its position unless some profound modification of the proposed arrangements is agreed upon.

I will add that it is the opinion of the French Foreign Office that, at the time when the English consent was given, no adequate idea was formed of the important tonnage involved. I have it from the British Embassy here that the figure of tonnage came as a surprise when the matter was discussed for approval by the French Government. I do not quite understand how our French Minister at Havre came to be consulted, but it is certainly a fact that his communication came at a moment when the Foreign Office here was hesitating and clinched a decision.

I will be glad to have your suggestions on any further steps on this side, but I believe that, for the present, the only action to be taken is with the English Government.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) L. CHEVRILLON

DOCUMENT NO. 211

Extract of letter, HOOVER TO C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, *anticipating consent of British and French Governments as to the use of interned German ships for carrying relief*

LONDON, 6 March 1916

Mr. C. A. Young, Rotterdam

DEAR MR. YOUNG:

GERMAN SHIPS

I understand that you will receive formal permission from the British Government during this week to complete the contract for the use of the German ships. I hope to be able to telegraph to you in a day or two that you can take the matter up with Mr. Wilmink.

The French Government seems to have seen some light in the matter as a result of my visit.[15]

As to publication of the amount of shipments into Belgium, there is not the slightest objection to this . . . .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 212

Telegram, HOOVER TO C.R.B., ROTTERDAM, *stating final consent of British Government and authorizing resumption of negotiations with Royal Dutch Lloyd*

LONDON, 15 March 1916

RELIEF COMMISSION, ROTTERDAM

Have now received final authorization from British Government to conclude contracts regarding use of interned German ships in the terms of the original agreements. You will please take the matter up with Wilmink and others as may be necessary to determine what is the present position.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 213

Letter, WILMINK TO HOOVER, *reporting the refusal of the German Government to permit the use of the interned ships*

AMSTERDAM, 1 July 1916

Herbert Hoover, Esq.
Chairman of the Commission for
Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR SIR:

I have received today a letter from Mr. Ballin asking me to inform you that a favorable decision in the question of tonnage for your Commission is not to be expected for the moment. According to Mr. Ballin the opinion in Berlin seems to be that with the Belgian

[15] From the 10th to the 15th February 1916 Hoover was in Paris discussing the relief work in Northern France with French civil and military officials. Hoover emphasized the perilous shipping situation of the Commission and urged active French assistance. The French reversed their decision on interned German ships made four months earlier and now requested Hoover to revive the negotiations. See chapter vi, Document 293. J. Wilmink, director of the Royal Dutch Lloyd, acted as intermediary between the C.R.B. and the Hamburg-American Line.

ships at your disposal you can provide sufficiently for the feeding of the Belgian population, and for this reason apparently they will not allow—at least not for the moment—the use of German tonnage for this purpose.

For your guidance, I expect to be in London some time during the latter half of July and will not fail to make an appointment, in case you might wish to see me.

I am, dear Mr. Hoover,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) WILMINK

The German decision not to permit the C.R.B. to use interned ships was closely related to the growth of the influence in Germany of the naval party which demanded unrestricted submarine warfare. To those in Berlin who supported this policy the humanitarian aspect of the Commission's plan was presumably less important than the realization that to permit the C.R.B. to use the interned ships would relieve the Allies of an equivalent tonnage burden. During the course of these negotiations the shipping situation had been getting steadily worse. In 1915 the Commission had lost six ships by mines or torpedoes in the North Sea. In the spring of 1916 Germans began a more aggressive naval policy[16] in the war zone; the available tonnage considerably diminished, while shipping rates mounted. The refusal of the Germans to allow the use of interned ships for relief would have left the Commission in much more desperate straits than was actually the case had not Hoover some months before the final German decision undertaken negotiations in other directions to find the needed tonnage. A scheme to establish a shipowning company as a part of the Commission was discussed but had to be abandoned. An appeal to the United States Government to permit naval colliers to be used by the Commission failed for the reasons shown in the documents which immediately follow.

[16] As a part of this aggressive policy the German High Command agreed that an unrestricted U-boat campaign should be commenced on the 1st March 1916. For political reasons the date was postponed until the 1st April. On the 24th March, however, the "Sussex" with seventy-five Americans aboard was torpedoed, the State Department wired an ultimatum, and the unrestricted campaign was again postponed. Cf. Scheer, *Germany's High Seas Fleet in the World War*, pp. 237–242.

DOCUMENT NO. 214

Resolution, H.R. 79, 64th Congress, 1st Session, in the House of Representatives, by Mr. Loud, relative to the use of navy colliers, etc., for the transfer of relief supplies

WASHINGTON, 6 January 1916

Mr. Loud submitted the following resolution,[17] which was referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs and ordered to be printed.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS the people of the United States, through various relief organizations, in compassion for the destitution of needy people of Europe, caused by the war now raging there, have contributed and are contributing large amounts of money, materials, and supplies for their relief; and

WHEREAS for the ocean transportation of such relief materials and supplies a large portion of the amounts so generously contributed has heretofore been paid: Therefore be it

Resolved, That such materials and supplies shall, during the present calendar year be transported in the auxiliary ships, to wit, colliers and supply ships, of the Navy, without cost to the relief organizations: *Provided,* That such materials and supplies shall be in suitable cargo lots, and that the loading and discharge of such cargoes shall conform to such regulations as the Secretary of the Navy shall deem necessary to carry out the intent of this resolution: *Provided further,* That not more than one-fourth of the tonnage of all such auxiliary ships of the Navy shall be used at any one time in such service.

DOCUMENT NO. 215

Letter, U.S. SECRETARY OF THE NAVY TO HOOVER, *declining to authorize the use of naval colliers in relief work*

NAVY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON
14 February 1916

Mr. Herbert C. Hoover, Chairman
Commission for Relief in Belgium, New York City

SIR:

I have given careful consideration[18] to the subject of transportation for Belgian relief supplies in Navy colliers to Belgium, as requested

[17] This resolution was introduced at the request of Mr. Hoover.

[18] There was also opposition to this proposal in the Department of State on the ground that international complications might arise from the transport of contraband goods in Government ships. (Lansing to Daniels, 16th February 1916.)

in your letter of 10 February and a telegram of 11 February from Mr. Bertron.

After consultation with regard to the matter, and after due deliberation, we have decided that it is impracticable to authorize the use of Navy colliers for this purpose.

I regret exceedingly that conditions make it impossible for us to aid you in your deserving work.

Very truly

(Signed) JOSEPHUS DANIELS
Secretary of the Navy

In addition to the proposals already noted, Hoover presented still another which, in spite of obstacles, was in part accepted by the governments concerned.

Among the vessels which the Commission had secured for relief service were a number which were Belgian owned. In general these had been bargained for by the Commission for each trip in the same manner as the British and neutral charters. In January 1916 Hoover proposed to bring all these vessels to the service of the Commission on a permanent basis. Some of these Belgian owned boats were flying the Belgian flag and the remainder had been transferred to British registry early in the war. The acquisition by the Commission of these ships for relief service would have meant a real contribution to the Commission's shipping program, but difficulties were immediately encountered with the Shipping Control Committee,[19] which opposed releasing Belgian ships under the British flag to the exclusive use of the Commission. Nevertheless with the assistance of the Belgian Government the Commission did secure most of the vessels under the Belgian flag and was thus assured of the permanent service of some nineteen vessels at a reasonable charter rate, and it could look ahead with some confidence toward successfully meeting part of its program each month. Though Hoover continued to press the Allied Governments for those Belgian vessels under British flag, the decision was finally adverse and the Commission was obliged to find the additional tonnage required in the open market as heretofore.

[19] Appointed by the British Government early in 1916 to exercise general supervision over shipping problems. The allocation of ships under British registry to the Allies was part of its duties.

DOCUMENT NO. 216

Telegram, HOOVER TO MINISTER HYMANS, *describing the shipping difficulties of the Commission and requesting the assistance of the Belgian Government in securing Belgian owned ships for relief service*

LONDON, 12 January 1916

MINISTER HYMANS,
Care of Prime Minister de Broqueville

Commission Relief in Belgium has been unable secure any British charters since 12th December and all our British ships en route Rotterdam have been detained here since 23rd December owing to Admiralty refusing permission to proceed until North Sea more free from mines. Situation is extremely serious and the outlook very alarming. We are endeavoring to arrange for all available Belgian-owned ships to enter our service but find that many are under the English flag and therefore liable to be prohibited from proceeding to Rotterdam. Please discuss situation with Minister Segers and raise question whether ships under Belgian flag which have been requisitioned could be released for our service and replaced in so far as required by Belgian-owned ships under British flag.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 217

Telegram, HOOVER TO PRIME MINISTER DE BROQUEVILLE AND MINISTER SEGERS OF THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT, *urging that the Belgian Government pass the necessary legislation making it legal to requisition Belgian ships*

LONDON, 26 January 1916

PRIME MINISTER DE BROQUEVILLE, AND MINISTER SEGERS, HAVRE

According information received from representatives of English Marine it is probable that friendly arrangements can be made between the Belgian shipowners and ourselves for the chartering of Belgian vessels for the Commission. In order to allow the Belgian owners to break their existing contracts, it is urgent that a bill should be passed making it legal to requisition Belgian ships without a moment's delay. Each day's delay means one day for Belgium without bread. The security of the boats themselves makes it necessary to place them under requisition. Whilst waiting this step no charters can be definitely fixed.

HOOVER

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 218

Letter, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *describing the relief-shipping situation and outlining proposals for using Belgian ships*

LONDON, 19 January 1916

Louis Chevrillon, Esq., Paris

DEAR CHEVRILLON:

We have been investigating and discussing Belgian-owned ships and we find that there are about twenty-five Belgian ships flying the English flag which would be suitable for our purposes, and there are about twenty-six Belgian ships flying the Belgian flag besides those already in the services of the Belgian Government which would also be suitable. Belgian-owned ships which fly the British flag are necessarily subject to English law and ten of them are at present requisitioned by the British Admiralty. Through the Belgian Legation here we have put up an urgent request that the English Government should requisition the remaining fifteen such ships, in order that they might terminate legally all their outstanding contracts and charters, and that immediately afterwards they be released (the whole twenty-five ships) on condition that they enter into our service at a reasonable rate. Furthermore, we have telegraphed this morning to the Belgian Government at Havre, urging them strongly to requisition, on their own account, the twenty-five ships which fly the Belgian flag, and are therefore subject to Belgian law, that they should then release the ships from requisition, subject to the owners entering into a reasonable contract with us, we undertaking that if the Belgian Government should require any of them for military purposes we would hand them over at once. This amount of shipping, together with such neutral ships as we could engage, would solve our whole problem, and this looks to be the only immediate solution. Even if we obtained the German refugee ships, there are not enough of them, under our present agreement, to serve our whole needs, and at any rate it would be at least three months before a single cargo would be delivered into Rotterdam by this means, which would mean that Belgium and Northern France would have been without food for a period of from thirty to forty-five days. If it should eventuate that we obtain the Belgian ships and also the German, we could release the Belgian ships for the general traffic of the Allies. I do not, of course, know whether we shall succeed on this Belgian line, or not, but in any event, it is no real solution of the shipping position from the Allied Governments' point of view, because all this Belgian tonnage is already in the service of the Allies and in some capacity or another, either private or public.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 219

Letter, CHEVRILLON TO HOOVER, *discussing French attitude to the plan to use Belgian ships*

PARIS, 29 January 1916

H. C. Hoover, Esq., President
The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR HOOVER:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your telegram of the 26th instant suggesting that I should seek support from the French Government of the Belgian scheme. I have, within the last two days, called at the various ministries, Admiralty, War, Foreign Office, Public Works; and although I find all earnestly interested in the question of a prompt solution of our difficulties, I find no inclination to give a blind support without more information than that which I possess. I have therefore cabled you yesterday as follows:

"Belgian scheme favorably considered, but Government will not recommend blindly, without knowing to what extent will affect military necessities. Insists on full list of ships in order to examine which can possibly be spared, as even those under British flag may be working for French military account."

You must, of course, consider that when I apply to the French Government I have in reality to take up the matter with a number of officials of various departments, each of which must be covered as to responsibility and refuses to recommend a measure unless he feels that he may consistently do so without prejudice to his other responsibilities, which are, of course, very numerous, very urgent, and very large.

I thoroughly realize that having cleared the matter in London and come to an understanding you may be under the justified impression that the French assent amounts to a mere approval of what the British Government considers proper to do.

Quite unfortunately this is not at all the case, and I am convinced here that negotiations to convince the Government that a certain measure is urgent will take more time and worry here than it does in more practical England.

I have, however, the positive assurance that in the instant I can lay before them a list of the ships to be requisitioned, with the particulars of each, and the exact number of ships needed by the Commission to complete its fleet, our matters will be attended to with prompt despatch. However, I am meanwhile trying to obtain a recommendation from the French Government of the requisition of Belgian ships by the Belgian Government provided that as each ship is requisitioned the French Government is allowed to accept or refuse requisition according to military necessities. This is the best I can do at present and I will not fail to write you further developments.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) LOUIS CHEVRILLON

DOCUMENT NO. 220

Telegram, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *notifying him that the adverse decision of the Shipping Control Committee in London left the Commission with the few ships under Belgian flag which might have to be confined to the service solely of the Belgian population*

LONDON, 3 February 1916

CHEVRILLON, PARIS

Am informed that decision here has been adverse to use by Commission of Belgian-owned ships flying British flag, which forces us back practically solely on Belgian ships flying Belgian flag. These at best could deliver only about 300 grams food per diem to Belgian population alone, and I fear we shall have to take decision these ships be confined to service of Belgians and full responsibility providing shipping for French population must rest on French Government who primarily Government most concerned.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 221

Letter, HOOVER TO A. SHIRLEY BENN, *describing the urgency of the shipping problem*

LONDON, 4 February 1916

A. Shirley Benn, Esq., London

MY DEAR BENN:

I have a feeling that perhaps I have not effectively stated the necessities of our case. The Belgian and French people themselves made certain demands upon us as representing the absolute minimum of food on which they could continue to keep their populations alive. We, on the other hand, in a desire that there should be no over-representation to the Allied Governments in the present critical shortage of ships, have most seriously reduced in its quantities the demand made upon us, down to a point representing what we consider an absolute minimum on which these populations can be kept going. I have the feeling that the Committee[20] must have taken the attitude that we were probably asking for twice what we could get along with and thereby reduced us one-half.

In round numbers, we have ten million people to deal with. Cutting us down to a carrying capacity of, say 60,000 tons per month of shipping under the Belgian flag, means 200 grams per capita per diem of food to these people. It is our obligation to furnish them with

[20] The British Shipping Control Committee had given preliminary decision against the proposal for the use of Belgian ships flying the British flag, and Hoover had asked A. Shirley Benn, Honorary Treasurer of the National Committee for Relief in Belgium (British), to exert his influence with the British authorities.

practically their entire supplies of bread, bacon, lard, rice, peas, beans, maize, condensed milk, soap, and supplies to some portions of the country of sugar, coffee, etc., etc. You can realize what this reduction in tonnage means when I tell you that the British people alone consume over 400 grams of flour per diem, to say nothing of all the other commodities. In other words, the effect of our position will be simply that the Allies are saying to their kindred in Belgium and Northern France, "We, of course, must have 400 grams of bread for our own people; we must have the bacon, lard, peas, beans, rice, potatoes, etc., which they require; but you, on the other hand, being prisoners in hands of the Germans, shall be further penalized by having your foodstuffs reduced to a quantity on which a human being cannot survive."

Therefore, do you not think it would be a square deal to these people that the whole of the breadstuffs of the Allied Nations should be pooled and that Belgium and Northern France should get their share? Is there any reason why we should not have our share of the ships to provide practically our share in such a pool? A reduction of 20 grams per day—that is, less than three-fourths ounce per day—in the bread consumption of the United Kingdom, would give us more tonnage than we want.

There is a deeper question involved than the above. It is not my position as neutral to point out political results. My sole job is to advocate on humane grounds the feeding of these people, and I think it would be desirable for you and other friends of the Belgians to point out to the Government the seriousness of the political mistake of reducing the foodstuff of these people to a point where they can justly say they have been deserted by the Allies, who are hogging after the food for their own people.

Now, after all this violence, I wish to make a constructive suggestion. In the first place, of the Belgian-owned ships under the British flag, some twelve or fourteen are at present requisitioned by the Admiralty. On the other hand, some ten or twelve of these ships are free and engaged in general trade. It cannot therefore concern the Admiralty particularly if the ships which are free from requisition at present are handed over to us, and in order to enable the owners to cancel their outstanding charters it is necessary that these ships should be requisitioned. This, I believe, could be accomplished by the Food Committee without bothering the Admiralty. Furthermore, we have fourteen voyage charters of English ships arranged for future dates, carried over some four months, and if we could have an assurance that these charters would not be requisitioned away from us this would also help.

Again, I may mention that on this general question there are a good many British ships plying in the Pacific between neutral ports, and there are even some ships on the list we asked for, which are trading between neutral ports, and it does seem to me that, in all these circumstances, it must be of some interest to the Allies to feed their own people rather than facilitate outside trade.

The Belgian people have a feeling that if they requisition the entire shipping flying the Belgian flag for our purpose, this shipping

could be devoted to feeding the Belgian population; but this leaves the French population of two and a half million people dependent on a few British charters which we have and such neutral charters as we may pick up, and of course the Belgian shipping does not provide enough tonnage for even a minimum bread supply for the Belgians alone. My only right of complaint in this matter is not personal but purely on behalf of the ten million people whose very existence is imperilled and the last I want to do is to give offense in the advocacy of their interests. So do not allow any one to take my sentiments as being in the slightest of an unfriendly character to the interests of the situation as a whole.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 222

Letter, HOOVER TO CAPTAIN BULTINCK OF THE ADMINISTRATION DE LA MARINE BELGE, *requesting the use for the C.R.B. of certain ships of the Royal Belgian Lloyd*

LONDON, 18 August 1916

Capitaine Commandant Bultinck
Administration de la Marine Belge, London

DEAR CAPTAIN BULTINCK:

With regard to our conversation of today on the needs of the Relief Commission in shipping, I beg to say that although we have taken a sufficient number of neutral charters to supplement the Belgian ships during the third quarter of the year, we have as yet been unable to secure the necessary supplement to the Belgian fleet for the fourth quarter and from thence forward it seems to us that the only solution of the needs of the Relief Commission is to obtain from the Belgian Lloyd further ships for our regular employ, beginning with the fourth quarter of this year and from thence forward.

We are receiving complaints from the Bunker Committee that we are disorganizing the neutral chartering market by our extravagant bidding for shipping, and we are quite unable to do otherwise as we must have the ships and the only way to prevent this disorganization by having our independent bidding on the market, is to put into our hands sufficient regular shipping from the Belgian Lloyd. We simply cannot take the responsibility of leaving Belgium and Northern France without food supply so long as we can obtain neutral ships at any price, and therefore we are constantly under pressure to bid against the Government for such shipping. We have repeatedly tried to lower prices by holding back lower bids, etc., until delays have threatened our supplies. It seems to us therefore that it is in the interests of all parties that we should have the Belgian Lloyd ships, in order to guarantee us a regular supply of food and at the same time to reduce our pressure on the neutral shipping market.

Unless we can obtain some assurance that we shall have a regular line of shipping for the fourth quarter we are compelled at once to begin a campaign for more neutral ships for this quarter and possibly disrupt things again in the same way as during the third quarter of the year. A few weeks ago we were without sufficient shipping for this quarter and we were compelled to go out and obtain ships at some price, and the result is the very reasonable complaint of the Bunker Committee which it is beyond our capacity to remedy. It appears to us that a common sense view of the situation is that there are so many ships in the world that we have got to have our proportion and that unless our energies die out we shall get them some way, but it is much better that we should be put beyond the necessity of being a disturbing factor to the whole shipping world.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 223

Memorandum, HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, *outlining the progress of negotiations for the use of Belgian ships*

LONDON, 8 February 1916

MINISTER WHITLOCK, BRUSSELS

SHIPPING

The Belgian Government completed the Law of Requisition last Sunday and it is now in force. The necessary requisition orders are going out today for all the ships flying the Belgian flag, of which there are nineteen. They are badly scattered all over the world, and it will take at least two months to get the whole fleet into action on our behalf. We shall, however, be able to get deliveries from some of the ships within the next thirty days.

This fleet will give us about 60,000 tons per month in Rotterdam and with a certain number of neutral charters, which we can no doubt get at some price, we shall be able to deliver at least an undercurrent of food supply. Our position has become considerably brighter the last few days because of this success with the Belgian ships and because of our having been able to secure a few more neutral charters. Also, what is more, we have had only one ship sunk in the last fifteen days. The shipping we have arranged seems to assure us normal deliveries in Rotterdam until the end of March and we have about one-third of our requirements arranged for April, all of this being entirely aside from the Belgian shipping.

The second part of our shipping program, that is, the securing of Belgian-owned ships which fly the British flag, has met a curt refusal from the Control Committee. I enclose herewith a letter written to Mr. Shirley Benn for this committee before the refusal and another written immediately after.

I may mention that Lord Curzon is chairman of this committee and is at present with the King of the Belgians, who has been asked by Mr. Hymans to take the matter up with Lord Curzon.

Furthermore, I have informed the French Government formally, that shipping under the Belgian flag will be unable to entirely supply the Belgian people, and that reluctantly we have been compelled to take the decision that we cannot ask the Belgian people to starve in favor of the French, and that the responsibility for the people in Northern France is primarily that of the French Government and that unless they can furnish us shipping we have to decline to continue. This attitude has produced a perfect storm in Paris, and I am going tomorrow to see if I can direct the hurricane so as to secure the second stage in our shipping program.

DOCUMENT NO. 224

Letter, British Foreign Office to Minister Hymans, *describing the shipping difficulties which impelled the Government to requisition another vessel under charter to the Commission*

Foreign Office, London
22 February 1916

Monsieur Paul Hymans
Belgian Minister, London

Sir:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 10th instant (No. 1463) regarding the requisitioning of the S.S. "Flandrier" chartered by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

I have laid this whole question before the competent authorities and I have the honour to assure you that it is the policy of His Majesty's Government to give to the Commission for Relief in Belgium such facilities for obtaining tonnage as are possible in present circumstances. But I wish to lay before you, for the consideration of the Belgian Government, the very great difficulties, and indeed dangers, to which the Allied Governments are exposed by the present extreme shortage of shipping. His Majesty's Government are in the position of having in large measure to supply the urgent needs of the other Allies, and they are therefore responsible in that measure for the due and proper allotment of resources on which the ability of the Allies to give effect to the guarantees just solemnly renewed to the Belgian Government must largely depend.

While, therefore, I welcome the representations you have recently been good enough to make in this matter, as tending to bring to a clear issue the question of relief to which your Government naturally attach such supreme importance, and while everything possible will be done to meet these representations with a favourable response, I trust you will represent to your Government the great difficulties in which His Majesty's Government are placed and will make it clear to them that the conflict, which so frequently takes place between

the military requirements of the Allies on the one hand and those of the Belgian Government in connection with the work of relief on the other, is not to be construed as throwing doubt on the good will repeatedly expressed by His Majesty's Government towards that work.

I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration, Sir,
Your most obedient, humble Servant
(For the Secretary of State)

(Signed) MAURICE DE BUNSEN

DOCUMENT NO. 225

Letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *stating the shipping requirements of the Commission*

LONDON, 8 September 1916

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

With regard to the shipping situation, I can only reiterate that the actual tonnage which we now want to deliver into Belgium and Northern France is 101,000 tons, actual weight. The tonnage required by virtue of space measurements and the necessity for the provision of some small margin for delays is another 24,000 tons, or, say, a total of 125,000 tons. Out of this as long as we can ship rice, beans, and some other commodities from this country, we do not need overseas for approximately more than 16,000 tons, leaving a balance of overseas tonnage required of 109,000 tons. The twenty ships we have in our constant employment flying the Belgian flag, should deliver approximately 60,000 tons per month, leaving 44,000 to be provided. If we obtained this tonnage from the States we should be able to handle it with ten voyage charters, or, in our regular employ, with an additional twenty average steamers per month. All this of course depends upon our being able to continue shipping supplies of beans from this country and upon our being able to obtain commodities in the States without having to go to the Argentine. Our position is that we have enough tonnage arranged to the end of October and we have about 50,000 tons of arrivals arranged for November. If we could get the twelve Belgian Lloyd ships which fly the British flag, which are under discussion, to add to our regular fleet, we would only need to go into the neutral market to secure about four or five voyage charters per month. I believe this would be a much more satisfactory arrangement, as it seems to us obvious that there would be a drop in neutral rates by removing our competition, and the same neutral ships would be available to the Allied Governments that are available to us.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

The refusal of the British authorities to turn over to the Commission the remaining Belgian vessels under British registry and the great difficulty of procuring charters in the open market led Hoover to revive the project of buying ships outright for the use of the C.R.B. In early 1917 plans were in hand to buy eleven ships of the American Transatlantic Steamship Company—the so-called Wagner fleet. These vessels were "blacklisted" by the Allies, for the reason that though they were of American registry, they were suspected of being German owned. The total cost of such a purchase involved some $10,000,000. Several of the vessels were already in British and French Prize Courts, and the ensuing diplomatic and legal complications held up the project. Another plan of a similar nature which involved the purchase of vessels just constructed in American shipyards proceeded to the actual signing of the contracts of sale. Both plans were dropped in May 1917 when the Commission learned that the Allied and American Governments proposed to requisition all steamers under their flags and pool their shipping resources.

DOCUMENT NO. 226

Telegram, Hoover to Commission's London Office, *cancelling arrangements for ship purchases*

New York, 3 May 1917

Relief Commission, London

Cancel all arrangements with White and others regarding purchase ships. Pool to include all Allied shipping will probably be formed to control purchase and assignment of tonnage and even should we purchase ships now it would only mean that we would have that much less tonnage assigned us later on.

Hoover

4. *Unrestricted Submarine Warfare. February–April 1917*

In spite of the fact that as a result of the "Lusitania" and "Sussex" controversies with America the Germans did not launch the proposed unrestricted U-boat campaign in 1916, eleven of the Commission's vessels were sunk or badly damaged by torpedoes or mines during that year. These losses[21]

[21] The Commission's program at this time required the continuous service of fifty to sixty vessels, so that these losses which had to be made good by additional charters represented more than one-fifth of its fleet.

occurred despite the German safe-conduct passes and detailed instructions from the British Admiralty with which all relief ships were provided. Moreover although the Allies did not adopt the principle of unified shipping control until late in 1917, the growing insufficiency of tonnage had forced the authorities—notably the British—to extend the policy of requisition, until by the end of 1916 practically all vessels under Allied flags were in the government service. This condition bore heavily on the Commission forcing it to rely mainly on its Belgian vessels, which were too few for its needs, and on neutral charters, which were increasingly difficult to obtain.

The commencement of the German unrestricted U-boat campaign on the 1st February 1917 brought disaster, sudden and complete, to the Commission's shipping program. Neutral shipping was promptly withdrawn from the Commission's service, the owners preferring to hold their vessels idle in safe harbors to exposing them and their crews to the hazards of torpedo and mine. There remained for the Commission only its Belgian ships. But even these could not be used, for though the German announcement had specified a "safe lane," no such "safe lane" existed, since the German danger zone and British mine fields off Heligoland and the Danish and Dutch coasts overlapped, making Rotterdam inaccessible. On the 1st February 1917 the Commission had seventeen oversea cargoes en route to Rotterdam. Of these but two reached the Dutch port safely; two were sunk by torpedoes; and the Commission ordered the remaining thirteen to English ports pending assurances from the Germans that they would be free from attack. Further sailings from America and elsewhere were halted for the same cause. Despite every effort on the part of the Commission, the Germans refused to permit relief vessels to pass through the English Channel or to grant immunity to relief vessels which called at English ports for coal, inspection, or orders. After extended negotiations, which are given in the following documents, the Germans announced a safe lane for oversea relief vessels, the route passing north of the Shetland Islands, thence along the Norwegian coast, and through an extremely narrow lane in the North Sea to Rotterdam. The Commission made persistent efforts to move the thirteen

oversea cargoes held in English ports, and though the Germans agreed in principle to this they nevertheless made restrictions which made the operation impossible. Eventually the Commission unloaded the cargoes of these impounded vessels in England, and the vessels themselves returned to the United States. No scheme could be devised for moving these provisions to Rotterdam, and together with the large stocks of food owned by the Commission in England and France—a total of nearly 100,000 tons—they were sold on government orders to prevent deterioration. This forced sale did not mean an absolute loss, but it deprived the people of Belgium and Northern France of supplies of which they were in acute need.

On the 24th February 1917 relief vessels began to move again, though the northern route was not declared absolutely safe by the Germans until the 15th March.[22] The German safe-conduct passes, now issued through the Swiss diplomatic offices in America, stipulated the northern route, and in addition British sailing certificates required that each relief vessel sailing from America call at Halifax for British inspection. The consequence was that the voyage to Rotterdam was greatly lengthened. Henceforth, too, since its ships could not touch at English ports, the Commission was forced to bunker for the round trip in America, losing cargo space in consequence, or take on inferior coal at Rotterdam. The Commission was in worse straits than ever as the few vessels left in its service were necessarily less effective in delivering the required program.

From February to May 1917 was a period of reorganization for the Commission. America severed diplomatic relations with Germany on the 3d February and declared war on the 6th April, and Americans were no longer neutral. The reorganization of the Commission in the occupied territories, as described in chapter xii, did not relieve Hoover and his associates of any of their responsibilities in the vital matters of shipping, finance, or procurement of relief supplies.

[22] Letters, 12th and 13th March 1917, from the German Legation at The Hague to the Commission's Rotterdam office. See chapter xvii.

DOCUMENT NO. 227

Memorandum, GERMAN AMBASSADOR AT WASHINGTON TO THE COMMISSION, NEW YORK, *stating regulations for C.R.B. shipping under the German unrestricted submarine policy*

GERMAN EMBASSY, WASHINGTON
2 February 1917

Commission for Relief in Belgium, New York City

GENTLEMEN:

Enclosing herewith a memorandum regarding the details of the military measures at sea, I beg to inform you that safe-conduct only comprises the navigation routes outside the blockade around Great Britain and France proclaimed by the German Government on February 1st 1917.

Yours truly

For the German Ambassador

(Signed) HANIEL
Minister Plenipotentiary

MEMORANDUM

From February 1, 1917, sea traffic will be stopped with every available weapon and without further notice in the following blockade zones around Great Britain and France, Italy, and in the Eastern Mediterranean:

In the North:

The zone is confined by a line at a distance of twenty sea miles along the Dutch coast to Terschelling fire-ship, the degree of longitude from Terschelling fire-ship to Udsire, a line from there across the points 62 degrees north 0 degrees longitude, to 62 degrees north 5 degrees west; further to a point three sea miles south of the southern point of the Faroe Islands, from there across point 62 degrees north 10 degrees west, to 61 degrees north 15 degrees west; then 57 degrees north 20 degrees west, to 47 degrees north 20 degrees west; further to 43 degrees north 15 degrees west, then along the degree of latitude 43 degrees north to 20 sea miles from Cape Finisterre and at a distance of 20 sea miles along the north coast of Spain to the French boundary.

In the South:

The Mediterranean: for neutral ships remains open: The sea west of the line Pt. des Espiquette to 38 degrees 20 minutes north and 6 degrees east, also north and west of zone 61 sea miles wide along North African coast beginning at 2 degrees longitude west. For the connection of this sea zone with Greece there is provided a zone of a width of 20 sea miles north and east of the following line: 38 degrees north and 6 degrees east, to 38 degrees north

and 10 degrees west, to 37 degrees north and 11 degrees 30 minutes east, to 34 degrees north and 11 degrees 30 minutes east, to 34 degrees north and 22 degrees 30 minutes east.

From there leads a zone twenty sea miles wide west of 22 degrees 30 minutes eastern longitude into Greek territorial waters.

Neutral ships navigating these blockade zones do so at their own risk. Although care has been taken that neutral ships which are on their way toward ports of the blockade zones February 1, 1917 and have come in the vicinity of the latter, will be spared during a sufficiently long period, it is strongly advised to warn them with all available means in order to cause their return.

Neutral ships which February 1, 1917 are in ports of the blockade zones can with the same safety leave them.

The instructions given to the commanders of German submarines provide for a sufficiently long period during which the safety of passengers on unarmed enemy passenger ships is guaranteed.

Americans en route to the blockade zone on enemy freight steamers are not endangered, as the enemy shipping firms can prevent such ships in time from entering the zone.

Sailing of regular American passenger steamers may continue undisturbed after February 1, 1917, if:

a) The port of destination is Falmouth.

b) Sailing to or coming from that port, course is taken via the Scilly Islands and a point 50 degrees north 20 degrees west.

c) The steamers are marked in the following way, which must not be allowed to other vessels in American ports: *On ship's hull and superstructure three vertical stripes one meter wide, each to be painted alternately, white and red. Each mast should show a large flag, checkered white and red, and the stern the American national flag.* Care should be taken that during dark the national flag and painted marks are easily recognizable from a distance and that the boats are well lighted throughout.

d) One steamer a week sails in each direction, with arrival at Falmouth Sunday and departures from Falmouth about Wednesday.

e) United States Government guarantees that no contraband (according to German contraband list) is carried by those steamers.

DOCUMENT NO. 228

Telegram, C.R.B. London to C.R.B. Rotterdam, *regarding request that German Government exempt C.R.B. ships from certain restrictions resulting from unrestricted submarine campaign*

London, 2 February 1917

Relief Commission, Rotterdam

After conference with British Foreign Office and Ambassador Page, Ambassador will communicate Berlin reference German regulations relief shipping calling attention that prohibited German zone prevents arrival of ships by north as well as south of England. One-fifth our tonnage originates in English ports by purchases in United

Kingdom. German regulations totally eliminate this tonnage, which cannot be obtained overseas under present conditions. Also number of ships have sailed destined for British ports, which will arrive within next few weeks and cargo of which together with those already arrived will be excluded, which would break down ravitaillement. Also necessary vessels touch English ports for coal. For these reasons German authorities earnestly petitioned to allow to continue present guarantees of safety to vessels protected by marks and German safe-conducts from and to United Kingdom ports, Rotterdam, and overseas. Meanwhile ship in all available foodstuffs into occupied territories particularly Dutch products up to full quantity obtainable. Assure people of Belgium and France that Foreign Office expects ravitaillement to continue without serious interruption and that they must not be unduly alarmed. Call upon Legation Brussels, The Hague, for additional information.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 229

Telegram, AMERICAN CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES AT THE HAGUE TO AMERICAN EMBASSY AT LONDON, *giving status of C.R.B. supplies in Belgium and necessity of making arrangements as promptly as possible to permit continuation of shipments*

THE HAGUE, 2 February 1917

AMERICAN EMBASSY, LONDON

It is requested by Gregory that you be good enough to advise the Commission for Relief in Belgium that the present wheat situation is reported by Brussels as follows:

"Including Rotterdam stock for Belgium, native wheat 146,000 tons, exotic wheat 65,000 tons, total 210,000 tons. This would last until about May 1st at present ration. Until October 1st no new crop would be available. It is urged by the Commission that all endeavors be made to allow cargoes for it to enter through the free zone into Dutch ports, the British authorities to make inspection in Holland or at port of departure. That Germany be asked as a condition to allow the export of coal either from Germany or Belgium to Holland to coal Commission's ships for return trips, and that in order to move this coal, ample transport facilities be furnished."

LANGHORNE

DOCUMENT NO. 230

Telegram, C.R.B. LONDON TO HOOVER (NEW YORK), *announcing British decision that C.R.B. ships need not touch at United Kingdom ports and outlining request for modification of German regulations*

LONDON, 9 February 1917

HOOVER, RELIEF COMMISSION, NEW YORK

British Government has agreed that Commission ships in or outbound need not touch at United Kingdom ports, but for your confidential information must touch at British ports elsewhere such as

Halifax or Bermuda or West African Coast. Merry del Val through Spanish Ambassador Berlin and our Rotterdam office through German Legation Hague and Brussels office and British Foreign Office through King of Spain are asking German Government on basis concession British Government that boats not required touch United Kingdom to modify German regulations as follows:

1. All relief vessels clearing overseas ports or Rotterdam subsequent to February 1st and which do not touch at United Kingdom ports shall be furnished safe-conduct passes by German authorities and when protected with Commission signs and marks shall be allowed to approach or leave Rotterdam by either north or south routes through German danger zones and overseas without molestation.

2. Relief steamers now in U.K. and steamers which cleared overseas ports before February 2d and which may arrive later furnished safe-conduct passes and unmolested to Rotterdam or overseas.

3. All vessels in No. 2 allowed touch U.K. ports unmolested.

4. All relief ships carrying U.K. purchases protected between Rotterdam and U.K. both directions.

5. German Government to arrange for coal for relief ships at Rotterdam.

RELIEF COMMISSION

DOCUMENT NO. 231

Telegram, HOOVER TO SPANISH MINISTER AT BRUSSELS, *requesting him to ask German Government to permit C.R.B. ships to proceed by the Channel to Rotterdam*

NEW YORK, 14 February 1917

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

I have received a wireless from Marquis Villalobar direct from Berlin. I have replied as follows: Will you please see if you can get this message delivered to him:

"Am extremely glad to receive your cable. Under present situation I cannot leave here, but we are unceasing in our labor to obtain the re-establishment of the Relief. I am convinced that this can only be accomplished if the German authorities are prepared, first, to allow our staff to remain as before or accept some other neutral body in Belgium and Northern France on the same basis of freedom of movement and relations to distribution as hitherto enjoyed by our staff. In this particular I would suggest to you that a group of neutral army officers should be the most agreeable to both sides, and if by cooperation of Dutch Government this could be obtained, it should effect many facilities which are highly desirable. Furthermore we must have a safe lane opened to our ships into Rotterdam. At present moment our ships lie loaded in a dozen ports. Seventy thousand tons of food are in the United Kingdom, hundred thousand tons will be loaded here within the next ten days, and thirty thousand tons are afloat. The whole of our service is paralyzed until we can guarantee the immunity of these ships, and our resources are being consumed

in enormous penalties and demurrages right and left. The only logical lane is via Falmouth and the Channel to Rotterdam, and if German submarines are able to distinguish Dutch ships en route from Flushing to Southwold and American ships en route New York to Falmouth there should be no difficulty in continuing this lane by distinguishing our ships between Falmouth and Southwold. This is the most practical lane safe from mines and most possible of insurance and charter. The responsibility for the continuation of the Relief rests squarely upon the shoulders of the Central Empires, for our ships are prepared to sail and a staff can be quickly re-established under your patronage in Belgium."

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 232

Letter, ZIMMERMANN TO SPANISH AMBASSADOR IN BERLIN, *stating conditions under which C.R.B. vessels may proceed to Rotterdam*

BERLIN, 18 February 1917

To His Excellency Monsieur Luis Polo de Bernabé
Ambassador of Spain in Berlin

MONSIEUR L'AMBASSADEUR:

In reply to the letter of the 8th and 13th of this month—Nr. Reg. 2328, 2368, and 2369—which Your Excellency was good enough to address to me, I have the honor to assure you that the Imperial Government is profoundly grateful for the great interest which His Majesty the King deigns to manifest in the humanitarian enterprise of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and does not fail to appreciate the great value of his precious support. Also the Government attaches particular importance to the continuation without interruption of the work of ravitaillement of Belgium and the occupied territory of France. However, this desired continuation is in no way hindered by the proclamation of the war zone of January 31st.

1. Actually a note was attached to this proclamation giving a respite extending to the 13th of February for those neutral boats traversing the war zone in the Atlantic and in the Channel, and the vessels of the Commission which were en route would have had, consequently, plenty of time to arrive at their ports of destination, or else they should have known of the proclamation of the war zone before their departure. The vessels still on the high seas will be obliged to take the course to the north of the Shetlands outside the war zone. Free transit across this zone, especially by the Channel, will not be conceded, to my deep regret, for reasons of a military nature, especially as the Allies might abuse this concession for their own ends.

2. As regards vessels still in English ports, they would have been able to leave these ports during the respite up to the 5th of February, had they not been hindered by the British Government. In the meantime, the Imperial Government begs you to furnish them with a

detailed list of the vessels in question and the ports in which they are at present.

3. Safe-conducts cannot be delivered in the future except on the condition that the vessels take the course north of the Shetland Islands outside the war zone where no danger from the operations of the German Navy will threaten them.

4. Foodstuffs purchased by the Commission in England can only be sent to Flushing by the paddle-wheel boats of the Dutch Line to which a special permission has been granted.

5. To make bunkering possible to the vessels of the Commission, Belgian pit-coal will be furnished to them at Rotterdam.

The Imperial Government is persuaded that it will not escape the perspicacity of the Royal Government that further concession to the wishes of the Relief Commission would be incompatible with the German military measures dictated by present circumstances. They depend on the eminent military judgment of His Majesty the King, which certainly will not refuse to recognize the justice of the views expressed above. The Imperial Government therefore hopes that Your August Sovereign and His Royal Government will continue to lend their efficient aid to the humanitarian enterprise under the conditions created by the state of war.

I take this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) ZIMMERMANN

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 233

Letter, POLAND TO MERRY DEL VAL, SPANISH AMBASSADOR AT LONDON, *replying to the preceding*

LONDON, 22 February 1917

His Excellency Senor Don Alfonso Merry del Val
Ambassador of Spain in London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I beg to attach a communication which has just been received from the Swiss Legation, conveying a reply from the German Government, through the Spanish Ambassador at Berlin, on February 21st 1917, to the request which you were good enough to make concerning the modification of sailing regulations, and which I afterward requested His Excellency Monsieur Carlin to repeat. May I offer you certain observations in regard to several points which present themselves in connection with this memorandum? (The numbers used herein refer to the numbers used in the German communication.)

1. All vessels in port when the German edict concerning Relief ships was issued, were held. Vessels on the high seas, either not being equipped with wireless or not being allowed to use their wireless if they had it, could not be communicated with and, of course, arrived at their ports of call in accordance with their sailing orders. The statement, therefore, that these vessels could be communicated

with, cannot be accepted and they should be allowed to proceed to their destinations without interference.

2. As to vessels then in U.K. ports, their sailing orders, insurance policies, etc., precluded their taking the northern route, which had at that time been declared unsafe and hazardous and continues to be so to the present, so far as we know. Had these ships taken this route and been lost, their insurance policies would not have covered either hulls or cargoes. Among these vessels also were included a number of ships loaded with produce purchased in U.K. ports, whose insurance policies and German safe-conducts provided only for their transfer direct to Rotterdam from the Thames via Flushing. All these vessels should therefore be allowed to proceed to Rotterdam without molestation.

3. We have been absolutely unable to get neutral vessels to accept charters to Rotterdam via the northern route because of the fact that, at the best, it consists of but a narrow free passage between the danger zones of the belligerent governments—if indeed such a way exists at all—and this route lies through the section made particularly dangerous by floating mines. We therefore beg that an exception be made in the case of our Relief ships and that they be allowed to approach Rotterdam as heretofore by the southern route.

4. Foodstuffs purchased by the Commission in England are only allowed to be forwarded to Flushing by the paddle boats of the Dutch Line. These boats are not in a position to carry more than the smallest quantity of cargo; indeed we understand that they actually carry no cargo at all. It is evidently quite impracticable for them to transport the 20,000 to 25,000 tons of provisions which we purchase in the U.K. and send to Rotterdam monthly. Persistence in this regulation simply means that the German Government effectually prohibits and cuts off from the people of France and Belgium the supplies which have hitherto been obtained from this source, and it is a fact that the conditions are such that we cannot make up this quantity from overseas shipments. These shipments should therefore be handled as heretofore, in C.R.B. vessels with German safe-conduct passes, direct from the Thames to Rotterdam.

5. The action of the German Government in making this arrangement is appreciated. But if the Imperial Government really wishes, as it states, to assist the work of ravitaillement we feel that it should indicate this desire by attempting to meet the modifications which have been asked for by us. These requests for modification of the German regulations have been made only after a careful study of the regulations and in the belief that if the German Government insist on the original regulations being carried out they will, to all intents and purposes, render the transportation so hazardous and difficult that it will be impossible for us to obtain charters and that, therefore, the German Government will themselves break down and end the great humanitarian work which they state they wish to continue.

May we ask Your Excellency once more to present to the German Government the very serious aspect of the situation?

Yours very faithfully

(Signed) W. B. Poland, *Director*

DOCUMENT NO. 234

Letter, POLAND TO PERCY, *protesting against unofficial British proposal to unload C.R.B. cargoes detained in United Kingdom ports*

LONDON, 27 February 1917

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

The proposal which you have unofficially presented, that the Relief vessels now detained in United Kingdom ports by reason of lack of German safe-conducts, shall commence to be unloaded on Friday, March 2d, under the auspices of the British authorities, has been informally considered by the Commission.

In the event of indications of serious deterioration of cargoes, or evidence that the German authorities do not intend to arrange safe-conduct passes carrying immunity from submarine attack, it seems evident that some radical action will have to be taken by the Commission, but we do not believe that this time has yet been reached. Action of this nature by the British authorities, under these circumstances, might be followed by most serious consequences to the whole ravitaillement service. Even the color of precedent so established by the British Government, for the seizure of supplies imported by the Commission, might be taken advantage of by the German authorities in Belgium and France or made a plausible excuse for otherwise interfering with the Relief.

Dr. Kellogg is proceeding to Holland and Belgium for the purpose of presenting the whole question of the sailing of Relief ships to the German authorities and getting action from them.

The entire subject of the Commission's action in regard to these cargoes tied up in the United Kingdom ports, including the question of unloading, has been referred to our Chairman in New York and to the State Department, from whom we have not yet heard.

We therefore request that no action with regard to unloading be actually taken by the British authorities until we advise that we consider negotiations with the Germans have been exhausted.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND, *Director*

DOCUMENT NO. 235

Memorandum of conference at Foreign Office regarding Relief vessels detained in United Kingdom ports due to submarine warfare

LONDON, 28 February 1917

MEMORANDUM OF MEETING AT FOREIGN OFFICE

Present: Monsieur Chevrillon, Lord Eustace Percy, Mr. Poland.

1. *Insurance.*—Neutral cargoes and hulls. The Commission is to endeavor to get full insurance on cargoes, at market rates, and in the event of failure, the Government will make up the amount lacking.

As to hulls, the Foreign Office has submitted to the Treasury a proposition that insurance on the basis of the same rate be agreed upon, but this has not yet been put in order.

As to Belgian vessels, the Government is prepared to take over all insurance.

In the case of neutral vessels which may be ordered, on account of lack of bunkerage at Rotterdam to United Kingdom ports for coal, the Government is considering assuming full insurance of hulls and cargoes within the danger zone, but this has not yet been put in order.

2. *Action of the British authorities in regard to Relief vessels detained in the United Kingdom.*—The British take the position that it is absolutely necessary to discharge these vessels in the United Kingdom because no reliance can be placed on the German safe-conducts that they will effectually protect in the danger zone. Further, they would not offer the same guarantees as a safe-conduct by the northern route, for several reasons:

1. The submarines might not be advised that they must protect the boats of the Commission.

2. It might be difficult for a submarine in these danger zones to make a distinction as to which boats they should protect and which not.

3. The Germans may be inclined to sink all boats of the Commission in the hope that they will force the Allies to replace them.

4. One boat of the Commission has just been sunk in the danger zone (probably by a mine) and another has undoubtedly been torpedoed, whether in the danger zone or not is for the moment uncertain.

The British Government considers that it would be a crime on their part to venture cargoes of foodstuffs which are needed in England and submit them to such danger of being destroyed, at a moment when the country might itself be in danger of running short of supplies.

The British Government therefore considers that it is absolutely necessary to unload these foodstuffs and that it is very unlikely that the Germans will produce such safe-conducts as the British Government will consider a sufficient protection to warrant the dispatch of foodstuffs from the United Kingdom to Rotterdam. Nevertheless, the British Government will consider these foodstuffs as belonging to the C.R.B. and will undertake not to requisition them or use them for consumption unless it should be absolutely necessary. The British Government cannot be bound in this respect by any period of time.

On the other hand, Mr. Chevrillon and Mr. Poland, for the Commission, called attention to the fact that while it might be necessary, as a matter involving the release of tonnage or the protection of foodstuffs against deterioration, to immediately unload the vessels in U.K. ports, if there were a suggestion of confiscation by the Government, it would involve the whole principle of the ravitaillement work and should seriously endanger its continuance. Therefore, in accordance with the letter to Lord Eustace Percy on this subject, of

Kaiserlich
Deutsche Botschaft
B 1553/17.

Auf Grund der zwischen der Kaiserlichen Regierung und der Regierung der Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika getroffenen Vereinbarung bescheinigt der unterzeichnete Kaiserliche Botschafter, daß der

Dampfer: "F E I S T E I N"

Führer: Edvard Oestboe Heimatshafen: Stavanger, Norwegen,

Unterscheidungssignal: M J Q L

ausschließlich Güter der „American Commission for Relief in Belgium" für die notleidende Zivilbevölkerung in Belgien an Bord hat.

Der vorstehende Geleitbrief ist unter folgenden Bedingungen ausgestellt worden:

1. Er ist nur für die gegenwärtige Reise gültig und muß unmittelbar nach Ankunft in einem niederländischen Hafen dem dortigen Kaiserlich Deutschen Konsul oder in Ermangelung eines solchen dem Kaiserlich Deutschen Gesandten im Haag abgeliefert werden. Letzterer wird für die Rückreise ein ähnliches Zeugnis ausstellen;

2. Der Schiffer hat sich ehrenwörtlich verpflichtet, auf der Hin- und Rückreise alter Handlungen sich zu enthalten, die eine Unterstützung der Feinde Deutschlands darstellen könnten;

3. Die Schiffe der Kaiserlichen Marine haben das Recht, das Schiff zu durchsuchen; die Ladung muß so verstaut sein, daß eine Untersuchung leicht und schnell möglich ist;

4. Bei Nichterfüllung der vorstehenden Bedingungen verliert das Schiff alle Rechte einer [illegible] Behandlung.

Es wird empfohlen, den Weg nördlich um die Shetland-Inseln zu nehmen. Wegen Minengefahr wird dringend vor dem Weg durch die von der deutschen Regierung als Kriegsgebiet erklärten Gewässer, insbesondere den englischen Kanal, gewarnt.

Sicheres Geleit bezieht sich nur auf den Seeweg ausserhalb des von Deutscher Regierung am 1. Februar 1917 bekannt gegebenen Sperrgebiets um Grossbritannien und Frankreich.

WashingtonD.C., den 2.Februar 1917.

Der Kaiserliche [illegible]

Im Auftrage.

Kaiserlicher Gesandter.

Dieser Geleitbrief wurde heute dem Führer des Dampfers "FEISTEIN" ausgehändigt.

Philadelphia,Pa., den
Der Kaiserliche Konsul.

German Safe Conduct Pass, 2 February 1917, for C.R.B. Steamer "Feistein"

February 27th, the Commission could only agree to unload on the understanding that the cargoes would be considered exclusively the property of the Commission for Relief and not subject to levy or requisition by the Food Control or other British authority, and the matter was left on this basis for the time being. It was further pointed out that unloading on any other basis might be taken by the Germans as an excuse for interrupting the work. Attention was likewise called to the circumstance that the withholding of this food supply of 60,000 odd tons from Belgium and France, in connection with the other serious interruption of practically one month, might result in such a critical condition as would have grave political consequences.

3. *Coal supplies.*—The British take the positive position that they will not send coal to Rotterdam to supply C.R.B. boats or to make good to the Dutch Government coal that might be given to C.R.B. boats from Dutch supplies. They argue that the Germans are merely blackmailing and holding up the British Government. Further, vessels left in Rotterdam without coal, may be sent out by the British in defiance of German regulations to South Wales for coaling, without safe-conduct passes, the British Government agreeing, as before stated, to assume insurance for hulls from Rotterdam to South Wales and from South Wales out of the danger zone.

DOCUMENT NO. 236

Extract of letter, POLAND TO HOOVER, *describing the situation as result of attitude of German and British Governments respecting safe-conducts for C.R.B. ships in United Kingdom ports; also regarding the effect of these developments on insurance and chartering*

LONDON, 2 March 1917

H. C. Hoover, Esq., New York

MY DEAR HOOVER:

. . . . . .

Our great concern at the moment is the adjustment of the issue of safe-conduct passes so that vessels may proceed from the States; this is being urged in every way. When we attempted to despatch vessels from Rotterdam the German authorities refused to give absolute guarantees against submarine attack until March 5th, indicating very clearly that our position was correct in considering the north-about route unsafe.

The situation as to United Kingdom cargoes is very grave. I call your attention to my letter to Lord Eustace Percy under date February 27th, under separate cover. By messages received today, the Germans are proposing methods by which these vessels may be moved across, but the British Government, we are sure because of the pinch for food, finds objection to the details proposed by the Germans and insists that at least some of our vessels be unloaded. We regard this as grave and that it may be taken as an excuse by the Germans for interfering with the ravitaillement, but hope that this

action in unloading may be defended on the basis of depreciation of cargoes and necessity for releasing vessels to get additional tonnage. The Foreign Office have practically demanded the unloading of the "Samland," the "Vaarli," loaded with grain from the Argentine, and the "Vergotti," also loaded with grain from the Argentine; and this will be put in order on the distinct understanding that these cargoes are the property of the Commission and will remain so.

Our next great difficulty is in regard to insurance. Lloyds and the Companies have cancelled their arrangements effective March 4th, and despite every endeavor which we have made with the Government, we have not been able to make an arrangement yet for their taking over insurance on hulls and cargoes of neutral vessels. We do not know what we may have to pay, but I have told Nash, Guthrie, and Harvey that we will go ahead up to 8 per cent on neutral cargoes and after that will not insure at all; but as to hulls it will be necessary for us to assume extra war insurance over 2 per cent in order to be able to make contracts. This I have authorized, but notwithstanding everything I do in this respect I anticipate the gravest difficulty in obtaining any neutral charters for Rotterdam, as shipowners consider it very much more hazardous than trips to the United Kingdom; in addition to which, owing to the very serious lack of tonnage for the Allies, we are finding many open and more concealed obstacles put in the way of our charters, which we are endeavoring to combat in every manner possible, although they will be vital factors in the near future.

. . . . . .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. Poland, *Director*

DOCUMENT NO. 237

Memorandum of meeting, Foreign Office, Admiralty, Food Control, and C.R.B. Representatives, *regarding the unloading of C.R.B. vessels in the United Kingdom*

London, 3 March 1917

Present: Lord Eustace Percy, representing the Foreign Office; Commander Wyatt, representing the Admiralty; The Wheat Commission, representing the Food Control Board; Mr. W. B. Poland, representing the C.R.B.

After some questions regarding the position of C.R.B. ships, etc., Mr. Poland said that, before going on with the meeting, he would like to inquire its object. The Wheat Commission (the names of whose members were not understood) showed surprise that there was doubt in regard to the objects; they being—as understood by the Wheat Commission—to arrange for the unloading of all grain held by the C.R.B. Mr. Poland thereupon stated that the cargoes in C.R.B. ships belonged to the peoples of Northern France and Belgium; that the C.R.B. was their trustee and was obligated to forward the cargoes

to the people, who were approaching a point of starvation; that if it was the intention of the British Government to seize or confiscate these cargoes, the Commission for Relief was prepared to enter an immediate protest which would be carried to the highest authorities. It was therefore necessary, before carrying on any further discussion, that the position of the Government in this respect should be clearly stated.

After some informal discussion, Lord Eustace Percy said that the meeting was solely for the purpose of discussing the best manner in which the cargoes of vessels could be handled provided it was necessary to unload them; that the Government agreed it was distinctly understood the cargoes remained the property of the Commission and were unloaded for their account in order to relieve ships; that they were subject to C.R.B. demand at any time.

Mr. Poland stated if it was clearly understood by all the gentlemen present that these cargoes should remain without question the exclusive property of the C.R.B. (and they thereupon acknowledged that it was so understood), then he was prepared to discuss the unloading of certain cargoes. This for the reason that the delay in putting the German safe-conducts in order made it desirable to relieve the shipowners from the loss of the use of their vessels and also to provide additional tonnage.

Lord Eustace Percy reiterated that the British authorities considered the proposals made by the German authorities to be insincere and that the Britsh authorities did not propose to concede the unreasonable demands made by the Germans.

After further discussion it was decided to unload S.S. "Samland" at Bristol, S.S. "Vergotti," S.S. "Einar Jarl," S.S. "Vaarli," and S.S. "Fridtjof Nansen," all loaded with wheat, at London. S.S. "O. A. Knudsen, loaded with wheat, was not to be unloaded, at least until after the others.

Mr. Poland agreed to give to the Secretary of the Wheat Commission details of the cargoes of above steamers. The C.R.B. was also to have an inspector present to represent them at the unloading of the vessels.

The meeting then adjourned.

DOCUMENT NO. 238

Letter, Poland to Merry del Val, *protesting against German restrictions and explanations presented in Zimmermann's letter of 18 February 1917*

London, 15 March 1917

His Excellency Senor Don Alfonso Merry del Val
Spanish Ambassador, London

Your Excellency:

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of March 12th, stating that the German authorities have expressed their readiness to place coal at Rotterdam for the bunkering of Relief Commission's steamers

as soon as they receive an authentic communication to the effect that the work of the Commission will be continued on the lines laid down in a proposal made the 18th February last by the Governor-General in Belgium. I find no reference in previous correspondence to proposals made by the Governor-General, but this morning we received text of a communication which you were good enough to send us, signed "Zimmermann" dated Berlin, February 18th, which contains the following:

"With a view to settling this question, negotiations have been set on foot by the General Government in Belgium directly with the Protecting Ministers of the Commission. These negotiations have had as a result that the Americans will remain at their posts until further orders, the question of the introduction of other neutral agents into the Commission, in the first place to assist the Americans and subsequently to replace them, being reserved for the present."

Is this the communication referred to? If so, will Your Excellency be so good as to transmit to the German authorities the statement that, as they know, since they have been furnishing safe-conduct passes, we are and have been despatching vessels from overseas to Rotterdam via the northern route outside the German prescribed danger zone.

As to the transfer of produce and vessels between United Kingdom ports and Rotterdam, this is entirely suspended owing to the failure to receive any definite undertaking of safe-conduct on the part of the German authorities covering this service, their communications to date stating merely that in principle they are agreed to such a transfer. This we are informed by the British Government is not sufficient.

As to the continuance of relief, the Commission will, as in the past, do its utmost in every way to import supplies into Belgium and the North of France and will also maintain its representatives in those countries just as long as it is possible for them to carry on their activities and fulfill their guarantees to the interested governments.

It is to be pointed out, however, that from the 1st of February to the middle of March, on account of the German submarine regulations, instead of delivering 100,000 tons of produce into Rotterdam, as should have been done, we have been able to deliver only 12,000 tons. On the other hand, as soon as German safe-conduct passes were again issued, all vessels in United States ports were despatched to Rotterdam and we now have en route sixteen vessels, containing 55,000 tons of food.

In the German communication received today, the statement appears in (1) that to the proclamation of January 31st, establishing the war zone, a note was attached giving a respite extending to February 13th for those neutral boats traversing the danger zone in the Atlantic and in the Channel. Such a note was not conveyed to us, and this is the first intimation we have had of it.

We have understood from the communications from the German Legation at The Hague to our Rotterdam office, that the question of providing 20,000 tons of coal per month for outward-bound Relief steamers was only dependent upon our agreeing to transport a simi-

lar amount of Belgian coal by our returning barges into Holland, which arrangement was concurred in by the Rotterdam office. Are we now to understand that this arrangement is brought into question? Are we also to understand that the reply of the Imperial German Government, that coal would be provided at Rotterdam, as expressed in its communication to the Spanish Embassy in Berlin, communicated to us in your letter of February 23d, is now made conditional?

It is very necessary that the attention of the Imperial Government be called to the likelihood that if outbound Relief steamers are detained in Rotterdam by inability to obtain coal, the British Government will prohibit the entry of C.R.B. vessels to Rotterdam, with the result that the Relief service will again be interrupted.

We trust that the German Government will not reverse its undertaking in regard to providing bunkers at Rotterdam, upon the strength of which we have been despatching our vessels to that port; and we request that we be immediately advised as to the final position of the German Government in this respect.

We renew the expression of our thanks to Your Excellency for the highly valued attention you are so generously giving to these affairs.

Yours very truly

(Signed) W. B. Poland, *Director*

DOCUMENT NO. 239

Telegram, Hoover to Villalobar, *announcing the sinking of five C.R.B. vessels and requesting that the German Government be asked to give reliable guarantees for the safety of these ships*

London, 5 April 1917

His Excellency the Marquis Villalobar
c/o the Spanish Legation, The Hague

The torpedoing within last two days of "Feistein" and "Trevier" carrying 10,000 tons wheat having German safe-conducts and markings, pursuing supposed safe route laid down by German authorities again jeopardizes whole relief. This makes five ships torpedoed since February carrying 23,000 tons grain, and unless we can get some definite and believable assurance we cannot induce a single ship, much less the crews, to pursue this work and I have serious doubts whether Allied Governments will allow us to go on sacrificing ship after ship in constant violation of every sacred undertaking made by German authorities. We are doing our best to prevent this becoming point at which relief breaks and we are depending wholly upon your good self to see if you cannot find some solution that will again give reassurance that our ships can be protected and that we can continue.

Herbert Hoover

DOCUMENT NO. 240

Letter, HOOVER TO MERRY DEL VAL, *enclosing memorandum describing the situation of C.R.B. activities resulting from the unrestricted submarine campaign*

LONDON, 8 April 1917

His Excellency Senor Don Merry del Val
Spanish Ambassador, London

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I enclose herewith a memorandum reviewing the incidents and perils in which the whole Relief Commission is now plunged.

In view of this situation, we can only hope to succeed if: first, our Atlantic shipping is respected on the northern lane; and, second, in view of the shortage of shipping and food supplies, if we are provided at once with safe-conducts and a re-established service from the United Kingdom with which to move the stocks which we have accumulated here.

The position is one of extreme gravity for the whole enterprise and I am wondering if you will again exert yourself to bring this matter and if possible the memorandum enclosed, to the attention of the German authorities.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

MEMORANDUM

On the second of February 1917, we received from the Director of the Commission in Brussels telegraphic advice that the Imperial German Government insisted that the Commission should send its ships to Rotterdam by a route northward of the newly declared war zone, and that ships at that time in the war zone should proceed out of it by the most direct route, and could safely do so up to the evening of the 4th of February. At that time we had fourteen ships at sea carrying 76,000 tons of foodstuffs, either en route to or already inside the declared zone, and all but a few of them out of communication. Also at that moment we had stored in the United Kingdom 47,000 tons of foodstuffs awaiting shipment to Rotterdam. The notice given to us was entirely too short to make arrangements in all cases, either for the alteration of the route or the transportation of our stocks in the United Kingdom, and as a consequence eleven of the ships arrived in the United Kingdom ports in due course. In any event, we were advised by the Dutch and English Admiralties that the war zone declared by the German Government overlapped with the mine zone in the North Sea and there was no safe lane open on the route stated by the German authorities.

We were compelled to direct our New York office, not only to hold up all shipments abroad but also we were compelled to hold all arrivals and stocks in the United Kingdom until such time as a safe passage to Rotterdam could be agreed upon. The British authorities

made no difficulty over the recession of the previous requirement to search in the United Kingdom ports, and ultimately the German war zone was minimized so as to establish a lane into Rotterdam through the North Sea which they declared safe. The German authorities agreed to again respect our markings and to furnish safe-conduct passes by this route from America. These arrangements we settled on the 28th of February, and our traffic was resumed from the Atlantic seaboard after a cessation of one month and the accumulation of large demurrage costs.

In the meantime we had made repeated appeals to the German authorities for safe-conducts for the steamers then in the United Kingdom ports to proceed to Rotterdam, but as we could obtain no satisfaction in this matter, we were compelled to discharge the cargoes in order to release the ships and to prevent the perishable supplies from spoiling. Ultimately, on April 3d, the German authorities conditionally promised to give passage to four steamers then remaining in United Kingdom ports undischarged, but these steamers were not to proceed until the 1st of May. As it was hopeless to preserve the foodstuffs over such a period, these steamers were discharged as well.

The net result is that today we have upwards of 96,000 tons of foodstuffs in the United Kingdom. We were only able to deliver 24,000 tons in Rotterdam during the month of February and 9,600 tons during the month of March, as against 120,000 tons required per month. Owing to the alarm arising out of the unrestricted submarine warfare and from the sinking of our ships mentioned later on, even when on the "safe" lane, we have not been able to secure sufficient charters to fully re-establish our service. During the month of April, assuming that we have no further losses of steamers, we shall deliver less than 55,000 tons into Rotterdam. During these three months the Belgian and French populations will have been deprived of over 270,000 tons of foodstuffs critically necessary to prevent the most intense suffering amongst the people. Nor is the outlook for the future at all improving.

Of equal importance, however, with the direct loss and suffering entailed by the shortage of deliveries as mentioned above, has been the entire failure of the German submarines to adhere to the previous or new undertaking entered into by the Imperial Government as to the safety of our ships.

On the 3rd of February we learned that the Belgian S.S. "Euphrates" of 4,250 tons, outward bound in ballast, provided with the Commission's markings and a safe-conduct pass from the German Minister in The Hague, had been torpedoed without warning and most of the crew drowned. This act occurred before the expiration of the period notified as safe to the 4th of February.

On February 6th, the Danish steamer "Lars Kruse," carrying 2,300 tons of maize, inward to Rotterdam, provided with the Commission's markings, was sunk and only one member of the crew saved. The German authorities assert that this ship struck a mine, but much evidence points the other way.

On March 8th the Norwegian steamer "Storstad," en route to the

newly agreed "safe" lane, carrying 10,000 tons of maize, with Commission's marking and safe-conduct pass from the German authorities in the Argentine, was stopped by a submarine and subsequently torpedoed by it without examination of the ship's papers. One of the crew died of exposure and another was lost.

On March 16th the Belgian steamers "Haelen" and "Tunisie," outward bound on the "safe lane" from Rotterdam in ballast for New York, carrying all the Commission's markings together with safe-conduct from the German Minister at The Hague, were shelled by a German submarine, and six members of the "Haelen" crew were killed. They managed to escape, but the "Haelen" was so injured that she had to put into a Norwegian port for repairs.

On March 17th the Belgian steamer "Ministre de Smet de Naeyer" was shelled by a submarine in the North Sea, but managed to escape. She was outward bound in ballast and was provided with the Commission's markings and had as usual a safe-conduct pass from the German Minister at The Hague.

On March 31st the Norwegian steamer "Feistein," inward bound within the "safe" lane, carrying 4,650 tons of wheat, was torpedoed and sunk without warning in broad daylight off the Dutch coast near Terschelling. She carried all the Commission's markings and safe-conduct pass issued by the Swiss Minister, Washington, on behalf of the German Government.

On the 4th of April, the Belgian S.S. "Trevier," carrying 4,396 tons of wheat, was torpedoed in broad daylight without warning ten miles off the Dutch coast within the "safe" lane. She carried full markings and safe-conduct pass from the Swiss Minister, Washington, issued with the authority of the German Government, and six members of the crew were seriously wounded by shell fire after they had taken to the boats.

On April 2d the Norwegian steamer "Anna Fostenes," inward bound, loaded with 3,100 tons of wheat, was torpedoed near Rotterdam well within the "safe" lane. She carried full Commission's markings and safe-conduct pass issued by the Swiss Minister, Washington, on the authority of the German Government.

On April 8th we received word that the Norwegian steamer "Camilla," inward bound, with 2,600 tons of wheat, on the "safe" lane, had been torpedoed without warning. She carried as usual the Commission's markings and a safe-conduct pass issued by the Swiss Minister at Washington on the authority of the German Government.

Since resuming traffic on February 28th, three steamers have arrived safely and five have been sunk.

It is impossible to express the indignation which we rightly feel over these acts, and we are at a loss to know whether this continued sinking of steamers in violation of their undertakings is a settled policy of the Imperial Government or whether it is due to the reckless irresponsibility of submarine commanders. In any event the immediate peril and loss of life of innocent seamen continuing resolutely in the service of helpless people is transcended only by the tragedy of suffering imposed on those millions of men, women, and children we are trying to preserve.

DOCUMENT NO. 241

Letter, British Foreign Office to C.R.B., *regarding protests to the German Government and suggesting that the C.R.B. declare its inability to guarantee supplies for Belgium unless Germany make good the losses and provide against further sinkings*

Foreign Office, London
23 April 1917

The Commission for Relief in Belgium

Sir:

I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to inform you that the Spanish Government have not only transmitted to the German Government the protests recorded by the Governments of Great Britain and France regarding attacks by German submarines on your Relief vessels, but have added thereto an expression of their own reprobation of such outrages.

2. I am now to suggest for your consideration that the Commission, on their part, should move their Spanish and Dutch Patrons to make it known, in the name of the Commission, both at Berlin and at Brussels that, in view of these repeated attacks, which are in direct breach of the formal and solemn guarantees of the German Government, the Commission will be unable to assure the continuance of supplies, unless the German Government take immediate steps to provide that their engagements are respected by their naval officers, and not only replace the stores which have been lost, but also supply from their own merchant fleet a tonnage equivalent to that of the Belgian Relief vessels which have been torpedoed.

3. By adopting this course the Commission would free itself from any charge of interrupting the course of supplies and would place the responsibility of the due performance of this duty upon the German Government, who can hardly fail to appreciate the difficulties as to transport arising from the hesitation naturally felt by the Allies in providing vessels which run graver risks than those employed in their own service because they are navigated without armament and without special precautions.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble Servant
(Signed) Eyre A. Crowe

DOCUMENT NO. 242

Letter, Poland to Foreign Office, *regarding the C.R.B. losses from submarines, and justifying the continuation of relief*

London, 30 April 1917

Sir Hugh Daly, The Foreign Office, London

Dear Sir Hugh:

I beg to acknowledge communication from the Foreign Office received April 26th concerning attacks on Relief vessels. I note particularly that for the moment the Foreign Office has taken the re-

sponsibility of holding up at Halifax all Relief ships destined to Rotterdam. The Foreign Office, furthermore, indicates that they do not consider themselves "justified in granting facilities for additional Relief vessels to proceed on their voyage unless and until reliable evidence had been adduced that the German Government have no intention of sinking such vessels." I do not, however, understand that the British Government is proposing by this communication to suspend the Relief service, but wishes a review of the entire situation concerning the sinking of our vessels.

It is desirable, therefore, to give the facts as far as we know them today, and we believe this should be kept quite confidential.

Since the new submarine activity was instituted by the Germans, the following vessels have been attacked by submarines or sunk by mines:

S.S. "Euphrates." January 22d. 4,250 tons. Southwest bound in ballast from Barry Roads. Torpedoed in daylight about 250 miles out, within the present danger zone, but before same had been established. Vessel provided with German safe-conducts and all markings. Evidence of sole survivor, who was below at the time, indicates that at least pennants and balls were being displayed. No explanation of this occurrence except individual turpitude of commander of submarine.

S.S. "Lars Kruse." February 4th. 2,300 tons of maize. This vessel was en route from the Argentine. She was sunk during the night a short distance off the French coast within the danger zone. There was but one survivor, who was below at the time of the explosion. The vessel was provided with Commission markings but had no German safe-conduct. No testimony as to submarine. Seems possibly to have been due to mines laid by submarine.

S.S. "Storstad." March 8th. 10,004 tons maize. Provided with C.R.B. flags and markings; cargo was billed to C.R.B. as certified by German consular visa; but carried no German safe-conduct. She was shelled, torpedoed, and sunk during daylight without examination of ship's papers, about eighty-five miles southwest of Ireland while within the danger zone. According to the captain's statements this vessel was instructed to proceed from Gibraltar to Rotterdam north about, but was not instructed to keep out of the danger zone.

S.S.'s "Haelen" and "Tunisie." These vessels were attacked by a submarine on March 16th, two or three days out from Rotterdam bound north about in ballast. It was broad daylight, and they were displaying all Commission flags and markings and were provided with safe-conducts. They were in the safe passage east of the German danger zone. There seems to have been no excuse for the attack unless it be put down to the stupidity of the submarine commander. After the vessels were abandoned by the crews the submarine approached, whereupon the captains showed their safe-conducts and explained that they were Relief vessels, whereupon the submarine commander instructed them to proceed, which they did without further interference. The "Haelen" was severely damaged by a shell and seven of the crew were killed.

S.S. "Ministre de Smet de Naeyer." March 28th. 4,000 tons of

wheat. This vessel was en route to Rotterdam and, according to the captain's statements, was instructed to go north about but was not instructed to keep out of the danger zone. We have no means of ascertaining the truth of this statement. At all events on March 28th he was a short distance off Kirkwall, well in the danger zone, when the vessel was attacked by a submarine. He managed, however, to escape and got out of the danger zone, arriving safely in Rotterdam.

S.S. "Feistein." March 31st. 4,447 tons of wheat. Was provided with safe-conducts and markings. This vessel apparently got off the exact course and entered the British minefield area. There were three explosions between four and six o'clock in the evening. Two or three of the sailors claim to have seen bubbles of a torpedo, but the captain and officers saw no submarine or torpedo and did not appear to consider the evidence reliable. It does not seem likely that a German submarine would be cruising in the minefield area, and the probability is that the vessel did strike mines.

S.S. "Anna Fostenes." April 2nd. 3,062 tons of wheat. We have received no other definite information concerning this occurrence than the Admiralty's statement that she probably struck a mine in Lat. 54°N. 4°E., on the very edge of the danger zone.

S.S. "Trevier." April 4th. 4,330 tons of wheat. This vessel was sunk by shell fire and torpedoed by a German submarine during daylight. She appears to have been just within the danger zone on account of the captain's not having definite instructions as to the position of the Terschelling lightship. The vessel was provided with all Relief ship flags and markings and safe-conduct. She stopped and gave ample opportunity to the submarine for inspection. The captain thought the inspection had been made and found satisfactory and was proceeding on his way when struck by a torpedo.

S.S. "Camilla." April 8th. Loaded with 2,651 tons of wheat. Provided with Commission flags and markings. Was attacked by submarine off coast of Norway. We have no accurate report on the position of this boat as to whether she was in the danger zone or not, or of the circumstances surrounding her loss. We note in a Danish paper a statement by the captain that his vessel was boarded by men from a submarine; that the crew were driven into the boats and that the men from the German submarine were preparing to sink the vessel with bombs. However, she was afloat when last seen. We know nothing more of this circumstance.

S.S. "Kongsli." April 20th. 7,800 tons of wheat. Vessel was struck by mine or torpedo at 10:00 P.M. when eighteen miles west of Ymuiden in free zone, and had all Commission flags, markings, and German safe-conduct. It is impossible to determine whether torpedoed or not. No one saw a submarine. The vessel did not sink and was towed into the Hook. Cargo only partially damaged.

Attention is called to the fact that while ten steamers have struck mines or been attacked by submarines during the time January 22d to date, during the same period vessels carrying 95,853 tons of provisions have arrived at Rotterdam from overseas, and that more particularly during the month of April eighteen overseas vessels carrying 58,652 tons have reached Rotterdam.

Taking all these facts together, it does appear that the Germans have some basis for the claim which they make to excuse their dastardly record; i.e., that all the vessels, which can be proved to have been torpedoed as far as present information goes, were in the danger zone.

On the part of the Commission, in view of the foregoing and in view of other communications of the German authorities through neutral ministers of which the British Foreign Office is advised, I am willing to take the responsibility of saying that these occurrences do not yet indicate a purpose on the part of the German authorities to break down the Relief, and that despite the losses of our ships, we are amply justified in going ahead with the Relief work; and that we should continue to send forward our vessels with the utmost dispatch to Rotterdam.

Attached is a copy of a communication received from Baron von der Lancken by His Excellency the Marquis de Villalobar dated Brussels, April 13th, which outlines the German position and reiterates the undertakings which the Germans have made, that Relief vessels will not be interfered with by the Germans if they keep outside the danger zone.

I also attach copy of a communication just received through His Excellency the Minister for Belgium presenting a picture of the very distressing situation now arising in the occupied territories. This is only one of many communications of a similar character which we have received. I feel sure that the British Foreign Office will concur with us, not only that the situation demands the release of the vessels at Halifax and that we continue to forward relief cargoes from America, but that the greatest possible efforts must be made to increase by every means in our power the shipments to the people of Belgium and Northern France, among certain sections of whom starvation has indeed already commenced.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND, *Director*

5. *The Shipping Crisis. May–November 1917*

From the first month of unrestricted U-boat warfare until the Allies and the United States had the convoy system effectively established,[23] the losses of British, Allied, and neutral merchant ships upon which the Allied cause was absolutely dependent were enormous. In January (before the unrestricted U-boat campaign was launched) acts of the enemy had caused the loss of 368,521 tons. In February the

[23] In spite of its strong advocacy by many British and Americans, the Admiralty and shipping officials did not agree to adopt the convoy system until the middle of May 1917. It required several months to establish the system, and it was not until September that there was a decisive falling off in tonnage losses.

total was 540,006; March, 593,841; April (the peak), 881,027; May, 596,629; June, 687,507; July, 557,988; August, 511,730; September, 351,748. The true situation was not disclosed to the public, but Admiralty and shipping officials admitted that unless some means of successfully combatting the U-boats were promptly found the limit of endurance would be reached by November 1917. As late as the 29th June 1917 Admiral Sims reported that if losses continued at the rate of the last four months the Allies might be "forced into an unsatisfactory peace."[24] Naturally the Commission's operations suffered, as did all other shipping activities. In addition to the effects of the submarine blockade referred to on preceding pages the C.R.B. lost twenty-two vessels from mines or U-boats during 1917—twice as many as in 1916. During this period, likewise, the hard-pressed belligerents showed less and less hesitancy about requisitioning ships under charter to the Commission.

Under such circumstances it can easily be comprehended why during the four months following the institution of unrestricted submarine warfare a total of only 115,000 tons of food reached Rotterdam, compared to a minimum program to sustain life in Belgium and Northern France of 110,000 tons each month.[25] With the breakdown of its oversea service the Commission immediately increased its purchases in Holland, but this country had a serious food problem and hence permitted but little exportation. The Commission's cross-channel service, England to Rotterdam, which had in the first two years transported nearly 20 per cent of the total program was, after complete termination, slowly reinstated. This service, however, remained hazardous and limited, and furthermore Great Britain was getting short of food and there was but little to be obtained in the London market for Belgium. As the following documents indicate, these trying times led to some sharp controversies which did not make the Commission's burdens any lighter. Nor did they cause it to slacken its efforts to get food into Belgium. In America, which had become the main source of supply for Allies, European neutrals, and the C.R.B., Hoover fought to guard the interests of the people of occupied

[24] Sims: *The Victory at Sea*, p. 387; Frothingham: *The Naval History of the World War*, III, chaps. 3, 5, 9; Salter: *Allied Shipping Control*, chap. 4.

[25] See chapter iii.

France and Belgium in the face of the enormous pressure of the harassed Governments of the Allies. As United States Food Administrator he was able to prevent the loss of such tonnage as the Commission possessed and, by suggesting the possibility of a food embargo, to secure for the Commission a few badly needed cargoes from the Swedish, Dutch, and Norwegian Governments.

DOCUMENT NO. 243

Letter, HOOVER TO LANSING, *suggesting participation of neutrals in assisting Commission's shipping*

WASHINGTON, 26 May 1917

Hon. Robert Lansing,
Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. LANSING:

As you are probably aware, the Belgium Relief Commission is delivering about 60,000 tons of foodstuffs per month and it requires shipping to handle an additional 40,000 tons per month.

I understand that you already have particulars from the British Embassy as to the amount of Swedish, Dutch, and Spanish shipping which is available over and above the needs of those countries, and that you have particulars of the draft agreement between the British Government and the Spanish Government which shows the proportion of ships which the Spanish Government, at the beginning of April, was prepared to allow the British Government to charter and the proportion which it stipulated should be reserved for Spanish use.

I understand that this information shows a vast surplus of tonnage of these three neutrals available for service. The tonnage which we have in use at present transporting the present food supply is Ally tonnage, which could be armed if employed in any other trade. I also understand that various neutrals are making inquiries here as to whether their food supply will be cut off under the embargo.

It seems to me that the time has arrived when we might consider some definite service from these people of a character which does not jeopardize their ships but which leads them into the path of a little humanity, and that we should say to them that they should undertake to provide the transport of 100,000 tons of foodstuffs for the Belgian Relief, and to transport the wheat involved, which will amount to 60,000 tons per month, from Australia; and that unless they are prepared to enter upon this path of decent dealing we shall reserve all the questions of the export of foodstuffs from this country to these neutrals until further notice.

It seems to me that if this hint were given at the present moment it probably would be as effective as direct action under embargo legislation. The Belgian Relief Commission is prepared to pay the

same price which is made in this work for employment of ships for the Allies, or in setting a figure the price of foodstuffs exported from the United States will also be considered. I think it would be desirable to have these ferments working in the neutral mind as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 244

Letter, HOOVER TO FRIDTJOF NANSEN OF THE NORWEGIAN SPECIAL MISSION TO THE UNITED STATES, *outlining arrangements for providing supplies and ships for the C.R.B. and export licenses to Norway*

WASHINGTON, 22 August 1917

His Excellency, Fridtjof Nansen,
The Norwegian Special Mission to the United States,
Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. NANSEN:

In order that we may come to a definite understanding of the fulfillment of our agreement concerning the division of the Norwegian grain supplies now in the United States, and the allocation of Norwegian shipping for the purpose of transporting these supplies to Rotterdam and Norway, I review below the agreement as I understand it:

First: Your Government is to immediately transfer to the Commission for Relief in Belgium 16,000 tons of rye and 14,000 tons of wheat, now on the Atlantic seaboard, at original contract prices.

Second: The Norwegian Government will receive licenses for exporting 2,300 tons of wheat and 18,000 tons of barley.

Third: The Norwegian Government will charter to the Commission for Relief in Belgium the ships named below:

"Hermion"	7,000 tons cargo ins.
"Ramfos"	5,000 tons cargo ins.
"Olaf Kyrre"	4,000 tons cargo ins.
"Folkvard"	4,400 tons cargo ins.
"Kapana"	2,300 tons cargo ins.
"Fram"	3,600 tons cargo ins.
making a total of	26,300 tons cargo ins.

Fourth: It is understood that the Commission for Relief in Belgium will effect hull and war insurance on the above ships from Atlantic ports to Rotterdam, as follows:

"Hermion"	Kr. 5,267,000
"Ramfos"	4,054,000
"Olaf Kyrre"	2,000,750
"Folkvard"	4,000,000
"Kapana"	2,500,000
"Fram"	4,500,000

Fifth: It is understood that the charter rate will be Kr. 38 per quarter plus 25 per cent, which includes hull insurance, equivalent to the current rates between Atlantic ports and Norway. In view of the fact that the Commission for Relief in Belgium office will effect the insurance, the Norwegian Government will deduct from the total charter cost, the cost of the current hull insurance between Atlantic ports and Norway. Freight to be paid before departure in Kroner currency.

Sixth: It is understood that a steamer will be placed at the disposal of the Commission for Relief in Belgium immediately to lift the balance of the 30,000 tons, that is, 3,700.

Seventh: It is to be noted that the United States Government does not write insurance, and consequently the insurance offered by the Belgian Commission cannot be guaranteed by the United States Government.

We have already instituted inspection of the above named ships, and would be pleased to have your approval of this arrangement[26] at the earliest possible date in order that we may complete the program.

Yours very truly

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman, The Commission for Relief in Belgium

Accepted by

(Signed) FRIDTJOF NANSEN,
High Commissioner to the United States from the Norwegian Government

DOCUMENT NO. 245

Letter, HOOVER TO POLAND, *regarding shipping matters and stating the difficulties of finding a solution of shipping troubles*

WASHINGTON, 29 August 1917

William B. Poland, Esq., London

MY DEAR POLAND:

I am greatly obliged for your letters of the 3d, 6th, and 14th of August, with various enclosures, which are just at hand.

I fully realize the Belgian necessities and we should, by all means in our power, get the total program increased to 115,000 tons a month. We have obviously several methods of attack:

First—our own fleet
Second—further charters

[26] Arrangements of this general character were made with other northern neutrals.

We are apparently to have two consigned by the French Government as a result of all of their wide promises to furnish us with some tonnage, and, in this matter, I think you should add to my strong statements at this end, all the pressure that you can to convince the French Government that it must find the tonnage for its own people. In addition to this, we are hoping to get, under pressure of a shipping board here, the seven Wagner boats, and I am hoping that you may be able to get something out of Swedish quarters as per your letter.

It is well to bear in mind that the American fleet is very small, and that it is practically all required to carry our troops and material along our coasts and to France, and that we are running short on our imports into this country of very vital foodstuffs because we have not the ships under our own flag to press into service.

I hope to effect some results by pressure on neutrals. We will be securing you the Norwegian tonnage which departs within the next few days, and we will get something out of the Dutch. This, of course, will only be the actual cargoes delivered and not continuing charters. A hint has been thrown out to these people here that it might be possible for them to arrange, subject to other international conditions, for a supply of wheat from Australia, if they would go and get it; the condition to be that one-half of such wheat should be delivered to the Belgian Relief.

I wish to assure you that there is absolutely nothing that my mind can invent that we haven't tried to do in the last month. It was hopeless to get anything done here prior to the 10th of August, at which time most of the powers under the Food Bill came into action, and certain powers came to the Shipping Board. Also, at the same time, Mr. Hurley became the head of the Shipping Board and is co-operating finely to help us.

There are some factors in this question that fill me with great anxiety. The United States has been over-exporting its pork products, and we must moderate shipments from here, or . . . . we shall have actual shortages through this country, and we cannot afford to allow our population to run short of such foodstuffs without creating more opposition to the war than now exists. We are doing everything in our power to reduce consumption, but you should not be too optimistic about increasing, or even maintaining, the present pork products supply from here.

As to Francqui's trouble in finance, the only solution is the one which I repeatedly proposed, and that is for the Société Générale to advance the money to the Secours,[27] and for us, in turn, to give them securities or advances in London. This, of course, must be done with the full approval of the British Government, which it has long since granted. If we can increase the program, it will no doubt remedy the situation to some extent.

Altogether, the Belgians should get it through their heads that the world is entering into a period of absolute desperation in regard to

[27] During this period of reduced importations the receipts from the sale of provisions in Belgium were insufficient to finance the relief organization's huge benevolent program. See chapter xvi.

food supplies; that this program is no longer wholly a shipping problem, which is bad enough, but it is also a problem of the actual supply of food for all the parties concerned.

I received a very insulting telegram . . . . through the Belgian Government a few days since, and I replied in terms which produced from them an apology last night. I stated that none of us would stand for this sort of an attitude, and that they had better take over the business themselves. . . . . This attitude on the part of the various persons of this character has not done the Belgian cause and this Government any good. It must be borne in mind that we are supplying $7,500,000 a month[28] to the Relief here and doing all in our power even to the prejudice of our own people, by way of omitting from here absolutely essential imports, in order to give them shipping, and by way of sending foodstuffs which we can only secure by enforcing a reduction of consumption among our own people. It is about all they have a right to ask from any nation.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 246

Telegram, HOOVER TO HONNOLD, *objecting to diversion of Belgian ships from relief*

WASHINGTON, 15 October 1917

HONNOLD
COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, NEW YORK

Inform Mali[29] that if the Belgian Government divert any single vessel from the Relief I will prevent the sailing of such vessel from American ports.

If the Belgian Government has no consideration for her own people the American Government has and will enforce it.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 247

Telegram, STATE DEPARTMENT TO AMERICAN LEGATION AT HAVRE, *quoting the President's reply to King Albert's message relative to inadequacy of supplies imported into Belgium*

WASHINGTON, 26 October 1917

AMERICAN LEGATION, HAVRE

For your information. The following cablegram has today been addressed by the President to the King of the Belgians in reply to a

[28] U.S. Treasury advances to the Commission at this time were $7,500,000 and $5,000,000 each month for Belgium and Northern France, respectively. See chapter iv.

[29] P. Mali, Belgian Honorary Consul General. Like the other Allies the Belgian Government was hard pressed for ships.

message[30] received on October eighteenth concerning the inadequacy of food imports into Belgium and expressing the hope that further measures will be taken to meet the situation:

Quote. I have given most careful consideration to Your Majesty's cablegram, and I need not assure Your Majesty of the deep solicitude which I feel for the civil population of Belgium as conditions become incessantly more difficult and the obstables to be overcome increase in number.

While the Commission has delivered some 400,000 tons of foodstuffs since the submarine warfare began, it has shipped an additional 250,000 tons which have failed to reach their destination either because of sinkings or because of inability to complete delivery of goods in transit through the war zone, besides which the delays to steamers in transit have entailed the loss in carrying capacity of over 100,000 tons. The Commission has been powerless to prevent these losses and no one feels more deeply the suffering entailed than do its members.

Frankness in making a complete statement of the causes of the shortage compels me to say that even the Belgian authorities have from time to time increased the difficulty by requisitioning Belgian ships under charter to the Commission at critical periods.

The relief work requires the regular movement of 220,000 tons of shipping, and while the losses of ships and the failure of neutrals and of the Allies to supply shipping last June reduced their regular fleet to 120,000 tons, the Commission have by the addition of steamers furnished by this Government, and purchases of ships by the Government waived in their favor, now built up their fleet to 160,000 tons.

Furthermore, with my approval, Mr. Hoover has obtained from various governments certain tonnage for this purpose in return for food supplies. This has been done with an insistence we have felt could be justified only by the duty of maintaining the lives of these helpless civilians. For no other purpose have we gone to such length. We now have the hope through these means of securing sufficient additional neutral shipping, and with success in the negotiations now pending, there may be available a fleet of sufficient size.

Your Majesty is doubtless familiar with the financial difficulties of the Commission, which arise out of the inability of this Government to provide funds for expenditures outside of the United States, and the necessity of securing financial assistance from the other Governments for expenditures abroad, in which matter I trust Your Majesty will interest yourself.

The foregoing is but a general survey of the situation, but I trust it will convey to Your Majesty some idea of the difficulties with which the Commission has to contend. I need hardly reiterate that we are determined to do everything this Government can to meet the requirements of the civilian population of Belgium which has such a claim upon our sympathy and friendship, and that if we are unable to render them the full measure of services to be desired, it

[30] For King Albert's telegram see chapter iv, Document 172.

will be through no lack of effort or sympathetic understanding on our part. Unquote.

It is desired that you take an opportunity to impress upon the Belgian Government the fact that this Government has not only done all that could reasonably be expected of it to provide food for the civilian population of Belgium, but has exacted from neutral nations additional foodstuffs for the Belgians in return for concessions as to food and supplies. This has been done by Mr. Hoover with an insistence and severity that we have not exercised on our own behalf, and has caused some resentment which we have willingly accepted in the interest of Belgium.

Furthermore, we have given Belgian food shipments from the United States priority over all the Allies.

Neither this Government nor Mr. Hoover has any obligation other than good will in the matter, and Mr. Hoover has repeatedly asked the Belgian Government to take over the purchase and transport of supplies.

For your confidential information, I may say that the tone of implied criticism in messages from Belgian sources and the apparent attempts to load responsibility on individuals and this Government are difficult for us to understand. It is hoped that by taking every occasion to create an understanding of the true situation, and the difficulties before the Commission, you will succeed in ending the influence of those who apparently are seeking to convey an impression that the inadequacy of the food supply in Belgium is in any way attributable to negligence or lack of sympathetic understanding on behalf of this Government or its officials.

While Hoover labored in America with neutrals for the allocation of relief cargoes, Poland, the director in the London office, struggled, but with discouraging results, to procure neutral charters in the open market and to keep the charters already secured from being taken over by the British shipping authorities. Most neutral owners did not care to risk the dangerous relief service, and furthermore the Allied Governments had set up an effective but unofficial "control" of neutral vessels through the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive.[31] Thus as Allied shipping control became more broadly effective, the difficulties of the Commission increased. It appeared that in a short time all available tonnage would be in government service and nothing would remain for relief. Poland, therefore, appealed directly to

[31] Allied ownership of bunkering facilities made this control possible. No neutral vessel was allowed coal unless its charter had first been approved by the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive. The Inter-Allied Chartering Committee, of which the Executive was a part, had been set up in January 1917.

the heads of the Allied Governments to accept the principle of Allied responsibility for relief tonnage. Poland's efforts were crowned with success, when at the Inter-Allied Conference in Paris on the 29th November, before which he had pleaded the case of the Commission and its charges, the Allies declared that priority over all their own provisioning be given to the population of Belgium and Northern France. This was priority for food, but at the same time the decision guaranteed the necessary extra ships to the Commission to make possible the delivery of the agreed program. This was a decided triumph, but it was some time before the accepted principle was put into practice. As far as ships were concerned it was not until four months later, on the 25th April 1918, that the Allied Maritime Transport Council[32] was directed to find the necessary supplementary tonnage for the Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 248

Letter, British Foreign Office to Poland, *refusing to approve C.R.B. charters for more than one voyage*

Foreign Office, London
3 October 1917

The Director
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

Sir:

I am directed by Lord Robert Cecil to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of September 15th stating that the Commission for Relief in Belgium have chartered the Norwegian S.S. "Avona" for two and the Norwegian S.S. "Songa" for four consecutive voyages.

I am to state, in reply, that the owners of these vessels have already been informed through the usual channel that these charters cannot be approved. His Majesty's Government regret they cannot depart from the rule by which they have hitherto been guided that only charters for one voyage can be approved.

I am to ask you to be so good as to furnish a statement of the amount of tonnage now in the service of the Commission for Relief in Belgium or in sight for that service.

I am, Sir,
Your most obedient, humble Servant

(Signed) W. Langley

[32] Established on decision of the Allied Conference in Paris, November 1917, to make the most economic use of tonnage under the control of all the Allies. The first organized meeting of the A.M.T.C. took place in March 1918.

DOCUMENT NO. 249

Letter, POLAND TO UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, *replying to the above*

LONDON, 17 October 1917

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR SIR:

I refer to your No. 193,902/x/Coal.T.

First I would like to say that in regard to the "Avona" and the "Songa," these charters were submitted to the Allied Shipping Board before signature, and further that all charters for successive voyages contain a clause providing that each trip is subject to the approval of the Allied Board.

I note that in the case of the "Avona" and "Songa" the owners have been informed by the British Government that the charters which we effected cannot be approved.

You state that His Majesty's Government regret they cannot depart from the rule by which they have hitherto been guided that only charters for one voyage can be approved. I beg to say that no such rule has ever been applied to Relief charters. It has always been customary for us to charter ahead as far as possible, quite in accord with the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive. I think it possible that the effect of the application of such a new rule to the operations of the Relief has not been quite appreciated. You are of course well aware that the Belgian vessels, which are the only ones upon which we can count definitely in arranging our program from month to month, supply but about one-half of our required tonnage, and that the balance must be supplied from neutral or other charters. You will appreciate that in making provision for monthly shipments aggregating some 110,000 to 120,000 tons, which can be subject to no variation and upon which it depends whether the people of Belgium are or are not to starve, such arrangements cannot be made from month to month but must be determined far ahead.

In protecting our future imports we have therefore made the following charters ahead:

Norwegian Vessels

"Otta"	4 voyages
"Björnstjerne Björnson," to end of war, say	5 voyages
"Imo"	2 voyages
"Ivona"	2 voyages
"Songa"	4 voyages
Total Norwegian voyages ahead	17

Swedish Vessels

"Sandefjord"	3 voyages
"Fridland"	3 voyages

Total Swedish voyages ahead	6
Total voyages ahead	23

The application of the rule which you speak of would totally disarrange our shipping program and endanger the whole Relief.

Inasmuch as the British Government, in accord with the French Government, have in principle guaranteed to make up to the Relief the tonnage necessary to carry its approved program, any interference with these charters effected would make necessary additional allocations by the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive, the final effect being merely an interruption and disturbance of arrangements without altering in any way the shipping requirements. I therefore most respectfully but urgently request a reconsideration of your position in the light of the above.

In support of this request, I again call attention to the clause in our charters making each individual trip subject to the Chartering Executive, which would enable any emergency to be met at the time without, however, disarranging our whole program.

In accordance with the last paragraph of your letter, I beg to hand you a summary of our charter position month by month, up to and including December 25th, the end of our shipping month, also a recapitulation of same.

Our actual metric ton cargo requirements (allowing for case goods) for delivery in Rotterdam monthly on our present program amount to 111,000 tons, without any leeway or protection.

The experience of the past indicates that it is imperative, to insure delivery of this amount regularly, that we provide a shipping protection of not less than 20 per cent, which would make our provision for food delivery requirements Rotterdam each month 133,000 tons. You will see from the recapitulation herewith that for the three months ending December 25th we have so far provided but 102,000 per month, leaving us short on our present arrangements on the above basis 31,000 tons a month or on the basis of actual delivery of cargo 9,000 tons per month.

We are proposing to present this whole question of the protection of Relief charters and Relief cargoes to the Government within a few days, but meanwhile in the light of the above I think we are justified in asking that the charters of the "Songa" and "Avona" be not interfered with, and I hope that you will be able to advise us to this effect.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. Poland
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 250

Letter, POLAND TO UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE, *reporting the failure of the Chartering Executive to provide promised tonnage*

LONDON, 1 November 1917

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
The Foreign Office, London

DEAR SIR:

Referring to my letter of the 29th October to the Under-Secretary of State, I have just returned from an interview with the Secretary of the Inter-Allied Chartering Executive, who informs me that although we can rely on them to extend every assistance possible to the Relief, and that in view of the arguments presented it may be possible for them to confirm the several trip charters of the "Songa" and "Avona" which we had arranged, and to confirm the chartering of other Swedish vessels, still it is impossible for them to definitely assign, to the Relief, ships to make up the shortage of 10,000 tons for December and 40,000 tons for January.

In view of the above and the absolute necessity of this tonnage to insure the minimum living ration to the people of Belgium and Northern France, we beg that the Foreign Office will indicate to us how, in accordance with the understanding between the British and French Governments, the Relief is to be protected.

Action must be taken at once to avoid grave consequences.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. POLAND
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 251

Extracts of letter, POLAND TO HOOVER, *describing the results of his interviews in Paris with French officials and stating the decisions of the Inter-Allied Conference in reference to C.R.B. finances and shipping*

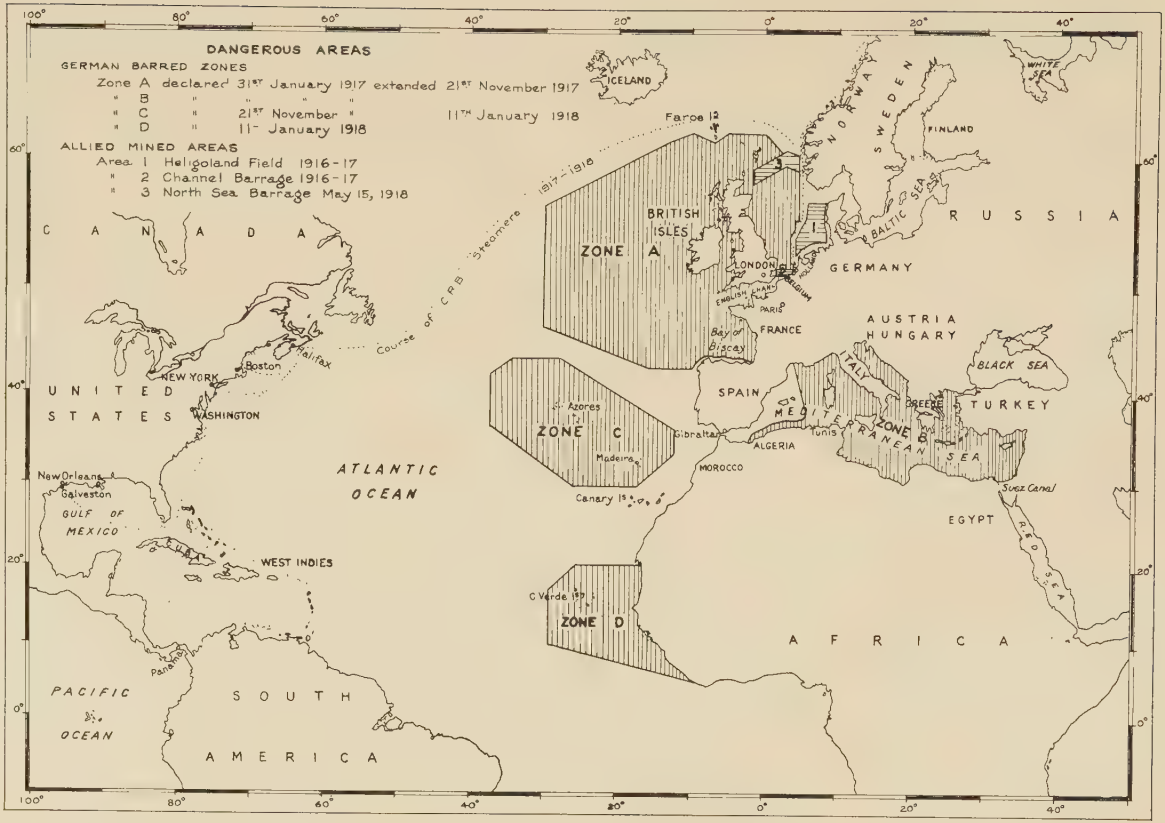
LONDON, 7 December 1917

MY DEAR HOOVER:

Shaler and I returned yesterday from a two weeks' trip to Belgium and France in which we were successful in accomplishing every object of the journey.

The first and most important was to provide for the financing of the European expenditure[33] along the lines indicated by your telegrams. Soundings of the British made it apparent that we could expect nothing from them until France had declared herself. We left London November 22d. Arriving in Havre we had a thorough understanding with Van de Vyvere as to the steps to be taken by the Belgian Government; arranged interview by wire with the French Minister of Finance; drove to Paris with Van de Vyvere, where we met Chevrillon; had a preliminary meeting with your friend Mon-

[33] See chapter iv, Documents 173 and 174.



North Sea and Atlantic Showing Danger Zones

sieur Homberg, who agreed to every proposition; presented to Minister Klotz a memorandum which had been drawn up. Van de Vyvere made an excellent argument. The Minister finally agreed that France should assume the entire European cost of the ravitaillement of her own people, and one-half the cost of the ravitaillement of Belgium, provided England would do the same. He also authorized me, in order to protect the guilder exchange, to effect a loan in Holland in guilders for an amount which has since been fixed at 60,000,000 guilders at the best terms obtainable: France to put up the necessary collateral; England being requested to join with France in the transaction; the loan to be guaranteed by England, France, and Belgium. This seems the most satisfactory way of meeting the very difficult question of guilder exchange, but I must say I foresee great difficulties and think there is about one chance in ten of success. However, I shall proceed to Holland immediately and hope for the best.

We have not yet heard of England's acceptance of the French demand, but I have no doubt whatever that it has been arranged before now.

Our second objective was to obtain the unequivocal guarantee of the French and British Governments—if possible joined by the United States—that the necessary tonnage and food for the ravitaillement of Belgium and Northern France should have priority over any other European provisions, whether for carrying on the war or sustaining the civil population.

To this end we first interviewed all of the principal Ministers of the new French Cabinet and, not without considerable opposition, finally obtained their enthusiastic support for the measure. We clinched this by a notable interview with Monsieur Clemenceau in which I forcibly presented the demands of the people of the invaded territories and asked his personal support for providing the necessary ships, food, and money. This he gave in the most positive way and assured us that the French Government would be behind every move we made. At the same time our objects were explained to several members of the American Mission,[34] and particularly we received the warm support of Dr. Taylor.

The French Government then, at the Allied Conference which followed on November 29th, demanded that shipping and food for the Relief should have priority over all the Allied requirements, and this was acceded to as expressed in the attached extract.

We impressed upon all the members of the French Government, and particularly upon Monsieur Clemenceau, that the mere agreement in principle to the above meant nothing, but it was necessary that officers should be designated to whom the Relief could present its demands and who would have authority forthwith to order them filled.

At an interview with Monsieur Clemenceau, he expressed a desire to have the same evening a memorandum of some of the facts which

[34] A mission headed by Colonel E. M. House sent to Europe in the autumn of 1917 to represent the United States on the Allied Supreme War Council and subsidiary bodies.

were presented to him in regard to the Commission. I dictated the memorandum attached [here omitted], which was sent in without an opportunity of revision and which I am rather ashamed of, since so much more might have been said and the whole subject better presented.

The question as to whether or not the Comité Hollandais[35] should be continued was again brought up and, upon our explaining that the provisions sent in by them were not supplementary but were included in our distributions to the French cities, the government officials seemed unwilling to make further appropriations to it. . . .

We were told by various French officials that all of the evacués coming out of France—and there are some 300,000 of them now—were united in praise of the American Commission and continually made statements that without our efforts the population would have succumbed.

It would have been impossible for the government officials or any of the French persons whom we met to have been more appreciative or sincere in their expressions of thanks. The gratitude of everyone was touching to the point of being embarrassing. This we found not only in Paris but whenever it was mentioned along the French lines, where we afterwards went, that we were of the American Commission or as it was often called, the Hoover Commission, which had been feeding Northern France. The same was true with all the Belgians, whether of the Government in Havre or along the Belgian front. . . . .

I am afraid you may have thought some of my telegrams were vigorous, but as a matter of fact we were in a perfectly desperate situation and for three or four days were absolutely bankrupt. We had to turn down an insurance cheque for £100,000 and had other payments of £90,000 and smaller amounts due which we were being urged to meet. In this emergency I could get no relief from the British, but fortunately Monsieur Klotz was in London and I appealed to them on the basis of the necessity of their protecting the reputation of the Commission on personal grounds and on the political grounds of what would happen to them in France if it were apparent that they had abandoned us at such a time. I imagine the last was the most effective, but in any event, they handed me direct a cheque for £1,000,000.[36]

Faithfully yours

(Signed) W. B. Poland

DOCUMENT NO. 252

Extract from a decision of Inter-Allied Conference in Paris, 29 November 1917, giving C.R.B. priority in ships and food

The Allies declare that they give priority over all their own provisioning to the ravitaillement of the populations of Belgium and invaded Northern France on the basis of the C.R.B. program such as

[35] See chapter vi, Documents 295, 299, 300.

[36] See chapter iv, Document 179.

defined in the Conference held in London between the C.R.B. and the British Government. They guarantee the necessary tonnage for the execution of this program, taking into account the ships which the C.R.B. now has at its disposal and those which it may procure in the future either directly or with the help of the Allied Governments.

[*Translation*]

6. *Shipping Problems of 1918*

By the end of 1917 the convoy system and other measures against the U-boats adopted by the Allies and America had demonstrated their effectiveness. The German High Command, which now controlled the political as well as the military policies of the Central Powers, recognized that in spite of the Allied shipping losses the U-boat campaign had failed, since the power of Great Britain had not been broken and the entrance of the United States into the war had brought tremendous economic and moral strength to the Allies. Recognizing this and the certainty that within a few months the weight of American man power would begin to bear more heavily on the Western Front while the resources of materials, morale, and men of Germany and her allies diminished, the High Command decided on that last, desperate assault to gain a decision in France. The first of the five German offensives began on the 21st March 1918. The second came on the 9th April; the third on the 27th May; the fourth on the 9th June; and the final drive on the 15th July.

The first German successes on the Western Front reacted on the general shipping problem, for, while the U-boat losses had been checked, the tonnage available to the Allies was still dangerously low and new burdens were imposed by the necessity of accelerating the transport of American troops and supplies to France.[37] Thus in spite of the fact that the Belgian and French relief had been recognized as a "war measure" and the C.R.B. program of ravitaillement had been, in principle, given priority over Allied needs, the Commission did not get the ships to carry out its program.[38]

[37] There were transported overseas 118,642 American troops in April 1918; 245,945 in May; 278,864 in June; and 306,350 in July. The shipment of food and equipment had naturally to increase proportionately.

[38] As has been noted in chapter iv, Documents 173 to 183, the Commission was in difficulty at this time regarding the financing of its European purchases. When the Allies finally accepted responsibility for these funds, the Commission was required to make its European purchases through the

From January to the middle of May the disheartening struggle for ships went on. Hoover in Washington and Poland in London ceaselessly pressed the Allied authorities to put the accepted principle into practice, and finally, as the documents which follow show, their appeals to the heads of the Entente Governments produced the so-called "fifty-fifty" agreement whereby the Allied Maritime Transport Council was directed to find one-half the supplementary tonnage for the Commission and the United States Shipping Board to find the other half.[39] As a result of this decision and in spite of the very real shipping shortage, the Commission was able, for the first time since October 1916, to meet its full program of deliveries in July, August, September, and October. This was a matter of very great importance to the people of occupied territories, who had been forced to go on cruelly short rations while the Commission was trying to break through the blockade that the U-boats had established.

Had the war continued, the shipping problem would unquestionably have been difficult throughout the winter of 1918–19, but with the Armistice came the release of considerable tonnage from war services. During the following seven months, therefore, the Commission moved practically 1,000,000 tons of provisions into Belgium and Northern France, supplying these territories with necessities during the first months of readjustment and reconstruction. The last oversea shipments of the Commission arrived in Belgium in August 1919.

DOCUMENT NO. 253

Letter, STATE DEPARTMENT TO HOOVER, *reporting that British and French Governments incline to the use of tonnage for military purposes rather than for C.R.B.*

WASHINGTON, 15 April 1918

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

In Mr. Polk's absence I beg to refer again to your letter of the 10th instant to him with which you enclosed a copy of a letter that

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medium of the Commission Internationale de Ravitaillement. A change in operating procedure was also made at this time. With the approval of the two Governments—French and Belgian—to which it was ultimately responsible for its financial accounting, the Commission cancelled all commercial insurance and set up its own insurance reserve.

[39] Representatives of the U.S. Shipping Board met with but were not actually members of the A.M.T.C. The measures jointly adopted effected a more efficient employment of the available shipping.

you had addressed to the President with reference to Belgian relief.

Pursuant to your request, cables were sent to the American Ambassadors at London and Paris and to the American Minister at Havre, requesting them to obtain the views of the governments to which they are accredited concerning the tonnage referred to in your letter.

The Department is in receipt this morning of cables from London and Paris, paraphrases of which I enclose herewith.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) GORDON AUCHINCLOSS
Assistant

From Paris.

The Ambassador was informed by the Foreign Office on April 13th that a conference would be called on the 23d instant in Paris for the purpose of settling the whole subject of tonnage. The necessity for administering relief to Northern France and Belgium is fully appreciated, although a preference was expressed for the use of the sixty thousand tons of shipping referred to for the transportation of troops.

From London.

I have just been sent the following answer from the Foreign Office:

"The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the United States Ambassador, with reference to Mr. Page's memorandum number 514 of the 12th instant relative to a question of allocating 60,000 tons of shipping, either for the transportation of American troops and supplies to France or to the Belgian relief, has the honor to say that in the present circumstances it appears to His Majesty's Government to be of paramount importance that this tonnage should be devoted to military purposes. Two. There would be no objection on the part of His Majesty's Government to the Commission for Relief in Belgium being invited to charter further Swedish ships now in Sweden."

DOCUMENT NO. 254

Memorandum, POLAND TO ALLIED MARITIME TRANSPORT COUNCIL, *setting forth shortage of tonnage for relief in Belgium and Northern France*

LONDON, 18 April 1918

MEMORANDUM IN REGARD TO THE SHIPPING REQUIREMENTS OF THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE, FOR THE MEETING OF THE INTER-ALLIED MARITIME COUNCIL, PARIS, 22D APRIL 1918

The civil population of the occupied territories of Northern France and Belgium is approximately 9,600,000 people. Normally Belgium imports two-thirds of her food supply and France a large proportion. At the present time practically all the native food resources of Northern France and the military zone of the Étapes in

Belgium (Flanders) have been wiped out, except for 190 grams per capita per day of potatoes from native production and 100 grams of indigenous flour, and the population of about 3,600,000 persons depends almost solely upon imported foodstuffs.

In the remaining territory of the General Government, including about 6,000,000 people, through lack of fertilizers, work animals, etc., the native crops, as in France, have diminished to about 40 per cent of pre-war production.

The Governments of France, Belgium, England, and the United States have given their solemn guarantees to the people of the invaded regions that they will be provided with at least sufficient foods to prevent starvation and the permanent physical deterioration of the race.

The Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France have been entrusted by the Governments with the responsibility of providing this necessary food.

In carrying out their duties, the Commission have prepared a program of monthly imports based upon the absolutely minimum living ration necessary to feed the civil populations. This ration, which takes into account all the native resources of the country, has been approved by the respective Governments. The imported products which it provides produce 60 per cent of the entire food values of the people's monthly ration, and they cannot be reduced without incipient starvation resulting.

General Conditions

The overseas importations required to provide the ration amount to 120,000 gross tons of cargo (Annex A)	120,000 tons
Allowance of 15 per cent to obtain ship deadweight...	18,000 tons
Total monthly deadweight ship requirements....	138,000 tons
Belgian requisitioned Relief tonnage (D.W.) monthly..	50,000 tons
Shortage to be made up by neutral charters or otherwise, monthly.....	88,000 tons
Permanent deadweight fleet requirements @ 66 days per round trip (138,000 tons monthly).....	303,600 tons
20 per cent allowance for protection.....	60,700 tons
Total deadweight permanent fleet requirements..	364,300 tons
Less permanent Belgian Relief fleet.....	110,000 tons
Shortage to be made up by neutral vessels or otherwise	254,300 tons

The Commission have been able to arrange additional neutral charters as per list attached (Annex B) for one or two voyages, which nevertheless leave us short for the monthly periods ending:

15th June ..... 55,000 tons
15th July ..... 70,000 tons
15th August ..... 60,000 tons

as shown in Annex A.

Owing to the Commission's inability, in spite of appeals to the Governments, to secure charters during February and March, there is at present due to lack of importations, a shortage of bread grains in the occupied territories equivalent to a complete deprivation of bread from overseas grain for twenty days. The situation confronting the people of Belgium and France is the most serious since the war began.

By a decision of the Inter-Allied Council which met in Paris December 5th last, it was established that the relief requirements of Belgium and France, both as to food and ships, should have priority over all other Allied requirements. This has been put into practice as to foodstuffs but in regard to shipping, while the principle has been acknowledged, the respective shipping executives have not given effect to the decision.

It is, therefore, proposed at this meeting that the necessary steps be taken to render the decision practically operative.

To this end, on the first of each month the Commission will be requested to furnish to the Allied Maritime Transport Council, London, a statement showing its requirements, shipping arrangements, and deficiencies in tonnage and steamers for the succeeding three periods of thirty days, beginning with the 15th of the month.

The Allied Maritime Council will thereupon indicate to the Relief the steamers which may be used to complete its program, by name, place, and date of loading.

DOCUMENT NO. 255

Extract, from minutes of meeting of Allied Maritime Transport Council, Paris, 25 April 1918, relative to supply for the C.R.B.

PARIS, April 25, 1918

RULING OF ALLIED MARITIME TRANSPORT COUNCIL

The Transport Council decides that all the articles necessary for revictualing the occupied districts in Belgium and Northern France shall be included in the program of the Wheat Executive if that body consents and shall be given the priority promised to them by the resolution of the Allied Conference of December 1917.

The C.R.B. should carry out the greatest amount of the necessary transportation possible with its own tonnage and that of the Belgian Government. Any further tonnage necessary will be allocated by the Wheat Executive from the tonnage provided by the Associated Governments. The permanent organization of the Transport Council is directed to arrange for such further tonnage as is necessary in order to assure the carrying out of this decision, subject to the assent of the Associated Governments.

DOCUMENT NO. 256

Telegram, HOOVER TO POLAND, *regarding failure of the Allied authorities to make good the tonnage promised*

WASHINGTON, 8 May 1918

POLAND, RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

British authorities in London telegraphed British authorities here to help out Belgian Relief, and, as has been invariably case heretofore, this help consists in advising the American Government to do something when it is clearly obvious American Government has insufficient shipping to handle its own prime necessities. If the authorities really intend to carry out provisions Paris Conference the British authorities must instruct Guthrie to turn over to Belgian Relief instantly specific neutral ships; otherwise you may take it that all expressions of priority or interest are absolutely valueless and give no indication of sincerity. We require 40,000 tons deadweight shipping for May loading. As Swedes have considerable unemployed tonnage, I cabled the King of Belgium telling him fate Relief hangs absolutely on his personal intervention the King of Sweden and that Allies will guarantee that any boats in employment of Relief may return to Swedish ports at the end of service without molestation.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 257

Telegram, POLAND TO HOOVER, *stating the necessity that British, French, and United States Governments regard relief as war measure to prevent starvation in Belgium*

LONDON, 11 May 1918

HOOVER, WASHINGTON

Referring to our 96 this date we understand on excellent authority that United States Shipping Board inquired of British War Office if they concurred in furnishing 60,000 tons required to fulfill relief program in order to give effect to the Resolution of Priority, which tonnage must be allocated at expense of shipment of men and munitions, and the British War Office replied they did not concur in this action.

It appears to us that this is the dividing of the ways and that the United States Government together with Great Britain has now to make the decision as to whether or not the people in Belgium and Northern France are to be fed. Purely as a war measure and independent of all considerations of humanity and the debt owed to our own Allies, we are sure the feeding of the people of the occupied territories is equally as important as the shipment of troops and food to Britain and France. We are sure that if this question were left to the decision of the public of Great Britain and the United States,

Belgium and France would be fed. Do you not believe the time has come to lay the situation before the public? And also will you not take this up personally with the President as we are taking it up with Monsieur Clemenceau and the Prime Minister. As a temporary measure to meet the May requirements we urge you to secure the concurrence of United States with the British proposal as outlined in our 96, as we feel sure this is all they will do at this time and at least establishes joint governmental responsibility.

POLAND

DOCUMENT NO. 258

Telegram, POLAND TO HOOVER, *regarding the plan for British and Americans to furnish tonnage on a fifty-fifty basis*

LONDON, 13 May 1918

HOOVER, WASHINGTON

Our 96 was misleading in describing proposal as British that United States and England furnish each half the shortage of tonnage to fulfill the necessary program. British first insisted that entire tonnage must come from United States, but finally on urgent request of Maritime Transport Council they agreed to the other basis as a compromise measure, which we believe is all that can be secured at the present time. If the above is definitely agreed to by the American Government Stevens[40] can secure conformity with it by the British authorities. The principle assuring C.R.B. ship requirements would then be established and it would only be necessary to prove our needs. There are many considerations at this end which seem to make American approval of this measure vital to securing our tonnage. I cannot too strongly urge you to do everything possible to obtain concurrence of the Shipping Board to Stevens' proposal of eleventh April. Relief Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 259

Telegram, HOOVER TO LLOYD GEORGE, *urging the latter's assistance in providing tonnage for the C.R.B.*

WASHINGTON, 16 May 1918

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

Would like you to present the following with the British National Committee to Mr. Lloyd George as from me as head of the Relief, not as a Government official:

"As Chairman of the Belgian Relief, I wish to again ask your personal intervention upon behalf of these suffering people. Three years ago, upon my personal appeal, you intervened to save the Relief and

[40] R. B. Stevens, American representative with the Allied Maritime Transport Council.

established it firmly as an unparalleled enterprise in humanity, with the full sympathy and generous financial support of the British peoples. That action, which cost much in sacrifice to the British people in its demonstration of their true and broad humane objectives in the war, became one of the most potent forces in the conviction of the American people of the Allies' just cause. At our adherence to the Allied cause our Government considered its obligations included a participation in the maintenance of these peoples who have suffered first and continue to suffer most from barbarism, and in so doing we have not only taken our share of a burden and humane duty but we have all of us, in the midst of the freezing flood of war, contributed to keep alive in the hearts of our people its higher aims. The problem today is ships. Our people have stripped to the bone to furnish transport of supplies and men for Allied support. We can furnish no tonnage unless sacrifice is made somewhere in these directions. The tonnage required is so pitiable, either in transport of men or supplies, in the vast totals, as to seem to justify the risk. Today to consign the Belgian people to starvation after three and one-half years of almost unendurable suffering and steadfast loyalty and service in the Allied cause, is indeed a terrible fate, and it will destroy an invisible but great spiritual force among our two peoples worse than the loss of a great battle. I feel that without Your Excellency's intervention and positive instruction the Relief cannot be saved and a direction from yourself to your authorities and a communication of your approval of necessary diversions to our President would yield solution by our joint shipping authorities."

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 260

Telegram, LLOYD GEORGE TO HOOVER, *answering the preceding*

LONDON, 23 May 1918

HERBERT HOOVER, CHAIRMAN
THE COMMISSION FOR RELIEF IN BELGIUM, WASHINGTON

I have received through Mr. Poland and the British National Committee for Relief in Belgium your cable of May 16th. I had already conferred personally with the Belgian Prime Minister, Mr. Poland, and British officials, and I understand that you have since learned through the Allied Maritime Transport Council of our willingness to provide one-half of the tonnage necessary to make up the monthly shortages of the Commission for Relief. I am gratified to hear today that the United States Government have agreed to take similar action and that, therefore, there is now no necessity for me to communicate with President Wilson as suggested in your cablegram. Details of the measures which we purpose to take are being cabled to Lord Reading through the Ministry of Shipping, and emergency arrangements are being made for ten thousand tons of flour to be shipped from the United Kingdom.

His Majesty's Government maintain their deep solicitude for the

people in occupied Belgium, and will spare no effort to relieve the privations they so gallantly endure. I am entirely in accord with the decision of the Inter-Allied Council that the relief requirements of Belgium and Northern France, both as regards food and ships, shall have priority over other Allied requirements, and I trust that the present joint action will assure the continuity of essential supplies.

I take this opportunity of saying how much I appreciate the lasting services you have rendered to all the Allies by your unfailing and effective efforts on behalf of the people of Belgium.

LLOYD GEORGE

DOCUMENT NO. 261

Telegram, HOOVER TO POLAND, *announcing the agreement of U.S. Shipping Control to the fifty-fifty proposal*

WASHINGTON, 21 May 1918

RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

American Shipping Control in conformity with British 50-50 agreement have allotted steamers "Harold" 5,100, "Talbot" 11,700, "Storviken" 7,500, "Dicto" 6,000, and "Senta" 5,800. Also accept obligation additional 18,000 June–July loading, which will complete American quota. This sufficiently concrete evidence that British offer has been accepted. A ghastly situation in Belgium has thus been averted by the individual efforts of the C.R.B.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 262

Telegram, HOOVER TO POLAND, *stating President's directions to the U.S. Shipping Board to supply fifty per cent of tonnage shortage to the C.R.B.*

WASHINGTON, 22 May 1918

POLAND, RELIEF COMMISSION, LONDON

The President today confirmed the directions to Shipping Board here that it should find at once one-half deficit tonnage for Belgian Relief and in accordance therewith ships have been assigned during the last few days to us by Shipping Board. I wish you would express my own personal thanks to Stevens for his assistance in this matter and inform him that Mr. Hurley will be confirming the American undertaking to find its half of the shipping.

I would also like to congratulate you on the sterling and predominant service that you have given in this, one of the most difficult crises through which the Relief Commission has passed.

HERBERT HOOVER

From the beginning of 1918 to the Armistice the Commission lost thirteen vessels,[41] bringing the total casualties of this character to fifty-two.[42] A majority of ships lost were provided with both German safe-conduct passes and C.R.B. markings, but in some cases the ships were undoubtedly off the prescribed course when attacked. The Commission entered vigorous protests in every instance where torpedoing was suspected and whenever the Germans admitted that the Relief ships had observed all German regulations, they made good the loss by replacing the cargo or paying for the damage. Although numbers of vessels lost were outward bound in ballast, the actual food cargo sunk amounted to 114,000 tons. Add this to the 95,000 tons of foodstuffs sold in England and in France in the summer of 1917 because of the submarine blockade on cross-channel movement and we have a total of over 200,000 tons of relief supplies sunk or sold en route and lost to the relief. This amount lost was the equivalent of two months' rations for the people of Belgium and Northern France.

During the four and a half years, ships flying the Commission's flag carried across the two blockades over 5,000,000 tons of relief provisions. Transatlantic vessels to the number of 993, and 1,320 smaller steamers discharged their relief cargoes at the Commission's transshipment ports. Seventy vessels, on an average, were steaming in the service of the Commission at all times. The technical management[43] of such a fleet was no little task in itself, but as the preceding documents show the struggle to get ships and to keep those that had been chartered made all other problems in comparison unimportant.

[41] The Germans continued the unrestricted U-boat policy until the middle of October, when in response to President Wilson's demand submarines were ordered not to attack passenger ships.

[42] For complete list of casualties and their causes see Gay, *Statistics*, pp. 42–43.

[43] A brief treatment of this subject and a description of the Commission's successful port arrangements (which largely contributed to the effectiveness of the fleet) will be found in Gay, *Statistics*, chapters iv and v.

Chapter VI

NORTHERN FRANCE

Many of the documents in the foregoing chapters have dealt with the relations of the C.R.B. with the French Government, but there have been only incidental references to the circumstances which led to the Commission's assumption of responsibility for the provisioning of the French population of the invaded regions or to the organization and methods by which this relief was accomplished. In some respects the relief of Northern France represented merely an expansion of operations already undertaken by the Commission. The 2,000,000 French people needed the same kind of relief supplies as the Belgians, which meant that the Commission had to purchase in greater quantities and to find and operate more ships than if only the Belgians were to be fed. In other respects, however, French relief was separate and distinct. In finance, for example, the Commission looked to the French Government and was accountable to it. In the actual distribution of relief a different system was employed and a new set of guarantees covering distribution, the use of native products, etc., had to be secured from the Germans distinct from those in effect in Belgium. These particular arrangements were due not merely to the fact that the beneficiaries were of a different nationality but to different forms of government established by the Germans in the regions their forces had occupied. A brief summary of these forms of government is necessary for an understanding of many of the problems of relief in Northern France.

In the Occupation Zone, which included all of the Kingdom of Belgium (except East and West Flanders), and the French districts about Maubeuge and Givet-Fumay, the supreme authority was the German General Government in Belgium, at the head of which was the Governor-General. In this zone Belgian city and communal administrations continued their functions; local police and courts performed their duties, all, of course, under the close supervision of German officials. The Governor-General's authority was paramount, and frequently it intervened; but in general there was less disturbance of local institutions and greater individual freedom than in the regions nearer the front and

under a different régime. It was in this Occupation Zone that the greater part of Belgian (as distinct from French) relief was delivered.

Between the Occupation Zone and the front lines was a strip of territory about fifty miles wide which included all occupied French territory between Verdun and the North Sea (except the Maubeuge and Givet-Fumay districts) and Belgian East and West Flanders.[1] This Army Zone, which was under the authority not of the General Government in Belgium but of the several German armies operating in the region, was in turn divided. An Operations Zone extended about twelve miles behind the actual front lines, and behind this was the Etape Zone comprising the territory between the Zones of Operation and Occupation. Subject only to the higher authority of the Supreme Command, the several German army commands imposed absolute rule in the Operations and Etape Zones. The application of military law was more drastic in the Operations than in the Etape Zone, but in neither did anything remain of civil institutions or personal freedom. The armies assumed proprietorship of property, of food, of currency; they arrested all French male citizens of military age; they forbade the inhabitants to leave their own communes, and in general restricted the conduct of private affairs to such an extent that the people had scarcely any greater liberty than actual prisoners of war. Although the systems of administration were not identical in all the Army Zones, there were but few variations except in the Flemish provinces, where the Germans mitigated the severity of their rule on the theory that the Flemings might be persuaded to break away from their allegiance to the Belgian State.

Its early activities in Belgium did not bring the Commission into contact with the military administration of the Army Zone. East and West Flanders were, it is true, at once included in Belgian relief, but the initial guarantees given by the army command in those provinces had been secured through the medium of the Governor-General in Brussels. It was the relief of the French population which extended the relations of the Commission to include both the German military authorities and the Government of France.

[1] A small area about Furnes and La Panne remained in Belgian hands.

The situation in occupied regions of France was no less desperate than in Belgium. Industrialized, densely populated, and effectively cut off from the world, the two millions of French people[2] behind the German lines quickly came to the end of their food resources and stood like their Belgian neighbors to the north in the face of starvation. As has been noted, two sections of French territory, the region about Maubeuge (with a population of about 110,000) and a part of the Meuse Valley from Fumay to Givet (with about 20,000 population), had been joined to Belgium for administrative purposes. The people of Maubeuge appealed for help and on the 24th November 1914 the relief organization agreed to the extension of aid to this region. A similar extension to the Givet-Fumay region was authorized on the 31st December 1914. No promise could be given to continue this extension or to permit it to be taken as a precedent, for further extension was entirely beyond the resources in the hands of the C.R.B.

1. *Conditions and Early Negotiations. November 1914–March 1915*

The need of relief in Northern France had been recognized and had become a concern of the Commission long before the 2d January 1915, the date of the first document below. There were, however, decisive reasons which prevented the undertaking of the ravitaillement of France coincidentally with that of Belgium. The first of these reasons was the military situation. After the fall of Antwerp and Ghent on the 7th and 13th October 1914, the situation in the greater part of Belgium quickly stabilized under the General Government which the invaders established. This stabilization—a necessary precedent to organized relief—came considerably later in the French regions, which remained zones of active military operations some weeks longer and which, even after the western front solidified, were for a longer time unorganized under the military system of the Etape and Operations Zones later established by the army commands.

Secondly, it was necessary to establish a diplomatic foundation for the whole project of civilian relief and to secure

[2] More than half this number lived in the contiguous arrondissements of Lille, Valenciennes, and Douai.

specific recognition and finance for Belgian relief before there could be any thought of extension. It is clear from the foregoing chapters[3] it was not until February 1915 that the Commission had secured from the belligerents the recognition necessary to place the relief project on a relatively stable basis and the promise from the Allies of the financial support to enable it to be carried on.

During this period of the Commission's struggle for recognition and long before the extension of relief to occupied French territory was officially sanctioned, French citizens received help through the relief organizations in Belgium. Thousands of refugees from the regions devastated by the machine of war streamed across the Belgian frontier and received the same aid that had been given to Belgians made destitute by the same causes. In November and December, 1914, Hoover authorized feeding in Maubeuge and Givet-Fumay, but at this time the Commission had neither the resources nor the official authorization of the French Government[4] for extending relief to the other French districts behind the battle line. The Commission's position was that while it was willing to assume the added burden of French relief, it could not do so on its own responsibility without the approval and financial support which the French Government was somewhat slow to give.

DOCUMENT NO. 263

Extract of letter, GERARD TO HOOVER, *quoting reports of need for relief in cities of Northern France, and quoting further a cable from the U.S. Department of State relative to the extension of C.R.B. activities*

BERLIN, 2 January 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

. . . . . .

Another matter which may interest you is brought up by our late Consul at Roubaix, who says that the civil population of Roubaix, Tourcoing, Lille, and the surrounding cities is in great need of flour

[3] Notably chapter ii (Organization), iv (Finance), and v (Ships).

[4] In reference to the early relief shipments into Belgium the French Foreign Office ". . . . states that it does not anticipate any trouble will be encountered from French authorities . . . . by American committee. . . ." United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1914, Supplement,* p. 820.

Relief Area of Belgium and Northern France

and that the authorities offer to pay for the same if delivered. I telegraphed to the Department, stating that our Consul at Roubaix had telegraphed me that 1,000 sacks of flour per day were needed for Roubaix, Turcoing, and Lille, and requested an arrangement with the German and British Governments for importation. Our Consul transmitted a letter from the Mayor of Roubaix, stating that 250,000 persons would be starving within a few days in those cities, and that the flour would be paid for and that the German Foreign Office assured every facility for importation through military authorities with co-operation of the Consul at Roubaix. I transmitted this information to the Department without comment and I have since received word from our State Department, in substance as follows:

"That the British Government raised no objection to the importation of foodstuffs in Belgium under the auspices and guarantees of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, and that their attitude was the same as to foodstuffs for France; and that the question how far it is desirable that the Commission should extend its activities to districts in France, now in German occupation, seemed to be one primarily for submission to the French Government.

"In any case, the Commission would have to satisfy themselves whether they would be permitted by the German authorities to form an adequate organization in districts so close to warlike operations, and that if it was desired to establish a system of distribution distinct from the work of the Commission, that this proposal would equally appear to be one for submission to the French Government."

The above is the substance of the reply of the British Government to our State Department, and I transmit it to you without comment.

. . . . . .

Please command me at any time when I can be of service to your Commission.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) JAMES W. GERARD
Ambassador

DOCUMENT NO. 264

Letter, HOOVER TO GERARD, *stating the willingness of the C.R.B. to undertake this expansion and giving the opinion that it was incumbent on the French Government to support such an operation*

LONDON, 6 January 1915

His Excellency James Gerard
American Ambassador in Berlin

DEAR MR. GERARD:

In respect to that portion of your letter of the 2d instant, relating to the position of the French people north of the German lines, we have had this called to our attention repeatedly.

We have felt that it is up to the French Government to support their own people, but we are not adverse to taking on the extra labor

entailed in finding the foodstuffs and transporting them through Belgium into this section, provided of course the Germans agree; but we do feel that as our labor is voluntary the least recompense which the French could give for such service from all our people would be that they should make a substantial subscription to our funds for Belgian work. I may tell you that we already are sending some food into one section of France, but other sections we have been unable to undertake, as we have no resources with which to do so.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 265

Letter, Hoover to Page, *describing his reception of a commercial proposal from merchants in Lille and explaining the attitude of the Commission toward French relief*

London, 26 January 1915

His Excellency Walter H. Page
London

Dear Mr. Page:

We had a call this afternoon from Mr. ———. Mr. ——— appears to have been despatched by the merchants in Lille to see if he could arrange for the importation of 10,000 tons of corn monthly to that city. He came to us to ask us to import the food for his purposes and suggested to us that he should have commission for himself in the matter, in remuneration for his services; and he also advanced the idea that, of course, he expected we should make a profit out of it also. He tells me he is armed with the money and is able to represent the people of Lille in this matter; that he is going to the French also and probably to the French Government. He says he has been to the English Foreign Office.

It is difficult to express myself with sufficient forcefulness on the question in polite language, but I wish to say, here and now, that, so far as having dealings with an American of the type of Mr. ——— is concerned, I have not the nervous energy to associate or mix with men of this character in any business matter, however minute it may be. If the people of Northern France are about to starve and if the French Government wishes these people fed it may make us a formal request and we will take the matter in hand with the same feeling of interest as we are experiencing in feeding the Belgians, as endeavoring to materialize the best ideals of the American people and to do so in a manner which will be to the national credit. We would supply the given ration of flour to the whole people of Northern France, destitute as well as rich, the French Government undertaking to supply us with the money to do this and making such arrangements for the repayment of the money by the local communes or

other authorities as they may see fit; but as to entering into this business as a commercial transaction, in a corrupt relationship with Mr. ———, the mere suggestion is an insult.

We have told Mr. ——— that if he is engaged in a commercial transaction to import food into France as a speculation for himself, with any Frenchmen who may be engaged with him, it does not interest us and we do not think it will interest the American Government or any of its officials, nor are we prepared to lend ourselves to any such transactions; and we made this perfectly clear as, in the meantime, Mr. ——— will endeavor to enlist your support and I have no doubt that he will also endeavor to set up relations through the French Government.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

In January 1915 Hoover was deep in the campaign to get the government subventions without which the Belgian relief could not go on. His chief concern naturally was the maintenance of this work already established, but throughout these negotiations he continually stressed the needs of the French population whose condition became more desperate as each day passed.[5] Meanwhile repeated attempts through diplomatic and other channels to get the support of the French Government failed. The Paris Cabinet held that Germany was responsible for the lives of the inhabitants of the invaded districts and that she must be held to that responsibility. Fully aware of the certain outcome of this rigid policy, Hoover pleaded the cause of 2,000,000 French citizens before the President of the French Republic.

DOCUMENT NO. 266

Letter, HOOVER TO POINCARÉ, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, *setting forth the condition of the people in the occupied regions of Northern France, outlining the steps taken by the C.R.B. to improve this situation, and appealing for the support of the French Government*

LONDON, 17 February 1915

Monsieur le President de la Republique Française
Palais de l'Elysée, Paris

MONSIEUR LE PRESIDENT:

I deem it my duty to lay before you the position of the French civil population north of the German lines, and I am asking Mr.

[5] In connection with the British financial negotiations, see Documents 129, 131, chapter iv. The French situation was also raised by Hoover in Berlin in February. See Documents 134, 135, 138, 140, chapter iv.

Gifford Pinchot, one of our members, to deliver this letter to Your Excellency in person.

This Commission has been engaged for the last three months in the provisioning of the civil population of Belgium, and is now dispatching into Belgium practically the entire breadstuffs for the whole population of 7,000,000 people. During the months of January the actual amount sent into Belgium approximated 90,000,000 kilos of breadstuffs, representing a cost value of about 32,000,000 francs.

This organization is supported partly from the sale of breadstuffs to the people of Belgium who still have resources, and, to a considerable extent, from philanthropy from all over the world, as over 1,500,000 Belgians are absolutely destitute. Hitherto the Belgian people have depended to some extent upon the native supplies of potatoes and meat which are now becoming rapidly exhausted, and in consequence if the Belgian population is to be saved from decimation, our monthly budget must very materially increase over and above the figure for January. Whether we shall succeed in maintaining the food supply in Belgium until next harvest is a matter of the most serious concern.

My object, however, in addressing Your Excellency, is not to recite the above facts except as they have a bearing on the French population between the French frontier and the German lines, which population I understand amounts to between two and three million people. The breadstuffs in this region have now been practically exhausted by the occupying army and the population and the supply of vegetables and meat will shortly be at an end. The blast of famine has already struck at the heart of certain localities and actual starvation is in progress. Representatives of these people have come over the Belgian frontier literally in scores, praying for food from our organization. We have sent representatives throughout Northern France with the approval of the German authorities and I cannot too strongly impress upon Your Excellency the extreme gravity of the situation.

Some four weeks ago we extended the boundaries of our labors to take in practically the whole arrondissement of Rocroi, as our investigation indicated that unless foodstuffs were introduced into this section the actual deaths from starvation, which had set in, would quickly decimate the population before outside arrangements could be made. Overtaxed as our resources already were for the Belgians, yet the Belgians themselves agreed to divide their last morsel with this population until something could be done. I therefore came out to London and represented to the French Government, through a member of our Commission who went to Paris, and myself made representations of this situation through the French Ambassador in London, to which appeals, made in the name of the French people of Northern France, we have had no reply. I have now again been to Belgium and have again investigated the situation in Northern France, which has now become acute to the last degree. Owing to the strain that has been put upon us I have been most reluctantly compelled to direct that no foodstuffs shall be sent over the frontier from Belgium into France after the first day of March. At the present moment

400,000 French people are being fed by this Commission, but unless we can receive financial assistance we cannot go on. It is no use dividing the food between the Belgians and the French in order that all may die. We have no right to take money provided to feed the Belgians and give it to the French.

I know perfectly well that Your Excellency will immediately reply: "Why do not the Germans feed the French civil population?" I have nothing to say except that, not only do they not do it, but they state emphatically that they do not intend to do it, that they have insufficient food supplies for themselves and do not propose to prejudice their own people. If Your Excellency could see the mobs of French women and children which surround every German camp from daylight to dark to gather the refuse from the German soldiers, Your Excellency would then believe that these French people will pay the last penalty unless someone comes to their rescue.

The load of work and worry carried by this Commission is already large enough, but, in the interests of common humanity, if the French Government can help us financially we will feed these people. A great many of the communes have resources in the shape of paper money and, in the case of the larger cities, ample resources in credit. We cannot, however, export either money or credit from Northern France, although we could undertake to take the obligations from these communes, ultimately handing these obligations to the French Government in discharge of advances made to us in gold.

I will not trouble Your Excellency with any description of the personnel or organization of this Commission; that is a matter that is open to investigation at all times. Nor are we seeking the labor of feeding the people in Northern France, but it happens that there is no other engine through which this service can be performed at the present time, as this Commission is alone permitted to traverse the lines of the various belligerents and this under international agreements which have taken a long time and much patience to perfect. Mr. Pinchot will give Your Excellency any further information.

In conclusion, before taking the heavy responsibility of saying to these people "you shall not have bread," I make this last appeal to the French people themselves in the name of their own countrywomen and children.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 267

Telegram, HOOVER TO GIFFORD PINCHOT, *stating the attitude the C.R.B. was prepared to take if the French Government declined to give its support to the relief enterprise*

LONDON, 25 February 1915

GIFFORD PINCHOT
CARE AMERICAN EMBASSY, PARIS

Believe would be fine idea for you go Northern France and investigate. Would be necessary for you go Berlin to get necessary passes to enter Belgium and Northern France. Will send you necessary let-

ters today. Consider it essential we should have definite statement from French Government one way or the other as to whether they are prepared save their own people in Northern France from starvation. As to our undertaking public subscription in France with guarantees you mention, do not think any possibility of raising sufficient money to even touch the fringe of problem by this means. As to guarantees, that is what this Commission was created for and stands for, and I do not see how any further superimposed check on Commission can answer any useful purpose. If French Government are not prepared to give us positive reply I propose make statement to press of the world that we have up to now fed the people along the border, that our resources do not permit us to continue, that we have applied to French Government for aid, that we do not believe this is a proper appeal to the world's charity, that the responsibility for the death of these people rests on the French nation itself; and I propose to do this simply to free this Commission from responsibility as to what will follow on withdrawal of our present supplies.

HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 268

Memorandum, by PINCHOT, *of a conversation with* M. RIBOT, FRENCH MINISTER OF FINANCE, *stating that the French Government would not formally approve providing funds for the C.R.B. but that money would be furnished to the Belgian Government which might be used for that purpose*

[Paris, 27 February 1915]

On Friday, February 26th, after five days unavailing attempts to see Monsieur Delcassé or Monsieur Poincaré—to whom I was the bearer of a letter from Mr. Hoover, I succeeded in seeing M. Ribot at his office.

M. Ribot told me—asking me to keep the matter confidential within the Commission:

1. That the French Government would give no formal approval to that item of the Belgian budget which provides funds for the Commission for Relief in Belgium, but that money would be furnished to the Belgian Government and the Belgian Government would be asked no inconvenient questions.

2. M. Ribot said that 400,000 persons in the invaded French provinces now being fed by the Commission would not be deprived of this food supply, and that the Commission should address itself to the Belgian Government for additional funds, as it might need them. "Not," said he, "to keep the French in the invaded provinces in luxury, but to give them what is necessary to prevent them dying of starvation." He added that the French Government was unwilling to undertake in its own name the feeding of its people in the invaded provinces, because to do so would be to put into the hands of the Germans the argument that since the French Government was permitted to feed its citizens therefore the German Government should be permitted to feed the people of Germany. I believe

that M. Ribot said directly—but if not he implied—that the French Government was unwilling to refuse publicly to feed its own people —and from that I made the natural inference that my failure to see either M. Poincaré or M. Delcassé was to be laid to their unwillingness to say either "Yes" or "No" to the propositions for feeding the starving French made in Mr. Hoover's letter to Monsieur Poincaré.

My interview with M. Ribot lasted not exceeding five minutes. He was careful to say that he was speaking not officially but in his private character only.

DOCUMENT NO. 269

Extract of letter, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON,[6] *stating the total C.R.B. stocks in Belgium at that time and discussing certain proposals for the relief of Northern France*

LONDON, 10 March 1915

Monsieur Chevrillon
Paris

MY DEAR CHEVRILLON:

I am greatly obliged indeed for your letter of the 8th[7] and all the trouble you have taken. As to the statement of Mr. Guérin of Lille, he certainly knows nothing whatever about our business. At the present moment our total stocks in Belgium are not fourteen days' supply (estimated ten days) and our arrivals are scarcely sufficient to meet already reduced rations which the Belgians are now on, and that reduction is partly due to the inclusion of the French population in the valley of the Meuse. The question is not what we have imported into Belgium but what there is left and, as I stated above, that is all there is.

. . . . . .

In the meantime I have a telegram from Brussels saying that two Swiss Army officers, accompanied by a German officer, had been making a tour of Northern France and that they stated that they intended to take over the provisioning of the French people north of the German lines, under an arrangement with the French Government. I send you a copy of a further telegram I have on this subject, amplifying the matter a little more.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

[6] L. Chevrillon, C.R.B. representative in Paris.

[7] In this letter Chevrillon described interviews with subordinate officials of the French Government and called attention to the fact that two representatives had arrived from Lille to negotiate for relief. M. Louis Guérin, one of them, was then in Paris and was reported to have expressed the opinion that the Commission had sufficient supplies for both Belgium and Northern France. The other representative had gone to London. See Document 265.

DOCUMENT NO. 270

Letter, CHEVRILLON TO HOOVER, *referring to Guérin's negotiations with French authorities and a proposal to bring the entire population of the invaded districts into the French lines*

PARIS, 9 March 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
London

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have seen yesterday Mr. Guérin of whom I spoke in my last letter. He mentioned having met you in Brussels and discussed with you the possibility of provisioning the whole of Northern France and especially the town of Lille. He is here under a safe-conduct from the German military authorities and must return on the 17th instant.

Mr. Guérin has begun negotiations with the various ministries, has seen Mr. Poincaré and Mr. Viviani and expects to come to a solution of the problem within a few days.

Confidentially, I can tell you that the alternatives are either to try to arrange with the Commission over which you so ably preside or to bring the whole of the population of the invaded districts into the French lines.

General Joffre has already been consulted on the subject and expressed himself as able to transport the people into France within three days. This of course is very confidential yet and the probabilities are that this measure will be resorted to as a last resource; the inhabitants are anxious not to leave all their belongings and interests at the mercy of the invader.

Meanwhile Mr. Guérin has begged me to discontinue my steps with the Government for a few days when he will be in a position to state the attitude taken by the Government. Of course the new decisions[8] taken in regard to the blockade of Germany and Austria may modify the views of the German authorities as to the victualing of Northern France, and these matters are now under discussion.

Under the circumstances, the best that I can do is to await for two or three days the result of Mr. Guérin's interview. I have pointed out to him very strongly that he should always have in mind the desires of your Commission as to the exportation of a certain tonnage of grain from France.[9] I do not doubt that these desires will be fulfilled should the Commission ultimately be asked to take up the provisioning of Northern France.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) L. CHEVRILLON

[8] On the 1st March 1915 the British and French Governments announced retaliatory blockade measures in reply to the German "War Zone" declaration of 4th February. By the Reprisals Order of 11th March 1915 the British Government declared its intention of stopping all goods of enemy origin or destination without regard to earlier rules respecting contraband.

[9] Hoover had suggested the possibility of securing grain from the stocks in France to begin the relief in the occupied regions. No such supply was ever forthcoming.

DOCUMENT NO. 271

Telegram, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *stating objections to French proposals to give relief to North of France*

LONDON, 11 March 1915

L. CHEVRILLON, PARIS

Yours March 9th. Scheme perfectly ghastly every point of view. There is in fact only one way to handle this problem and that is through this Commission. Our negotiations with Germans progressing favorably on all points required by us, basis being that food is furnished by charitable institutions which we represent.[10] Swiss proposals to ship foodstuffs from Marseilles by rail wholly impracticable. We have never been able secure transport even two thousand tons a month over same Belgian railway routes by which they would need to bring ten to fifteen thousand tons monthly. Even if railway supply practicable there is serious risk by shipping foodstuffs through Germany and the comparative cost would be the difference between railway haul all the way from Marseilles to Lille as against canal haul from Rotterdam. What is more the necessity for immediate relief is appalling and any scheme provisioning through Marseilles involves long delay. We are not keen on the job but feel that the size of the problem is not recognized and can only be adequately handled in our way.

HOOVER

2. *Fundamental Guarantees. March–April 1915*

Anticipating the ultimate support of the French Government in some form, Hoover had taken steps in two directions so that relief could be delivered to the North of France immediately the various agreements were reached. First he had drawn on the credit of the Commission in order to accumulate a supply of flour for French relief without diminishing the Belgian ration; and, second, he set about getting guarantees from the various German authorities, whose attitude, he already knew from his conferences in Berlin and Brussels in February 1915, would be favorable. As the following documents show, formal authorization for the extension of relief to Northern France was secured from the Berlin

[10] The Commission was obliged to adopt this fiction because of the unwillingness of the French Government to admit openly that it supported financially the feeding of French civilians in the occupied regions lest the Germans use this fact as an additional argument against the legality of the Allied food blockade of Germany.

authorities through Ambassador Gerard, but the all-important working agreement with the Army Headquarters was procured by the C.R.B. itself without diplomatic intervention. These early agreements as well as numerous subsequent guarantees were negotiated directly with the army command.

DOCUMENT NO. 272

Letter, HOOVER TO CONNETT, *in reply to the latter's report of observations of conditions in Northern France*

LONDON, 8 March 1915

A. N. Connett, Esq.
Brussels

DEAR CONNETT:

NORTHERN FRANCE

I am in receipt of your letter on this subject and we have had a lot of negotiations at this end which are still going on. We have had many assurances of ample funds to take care of this business, but it is going to be subject to very definite conditions that there shall be no interference with our foodstuffs and that we shall be given sufficient liberty of movement to organize the distribution in such manner as will guarantee that these foodstuffs reach the civil population only. The authorities in Brussels seem to have entirely ignored the fact that this is not entirely a question as to the necessities of the administration, as we might possibly administer the whole business without employing a single American, but, on the contrary, a question of satisfying the Allied Governments that guarantees given are duly carried out, and these Governments are not prepared to accept the assurances of anyone but Americans whose character and career they can inquire into; and there must be enough of them to effectively deliver such a guarantee.

I have in mind for the United States Government to appoint every member of this Commission whom I may designate an attaché to the Brussels Legation,[11] and I will be glad if you would discuss this with Mr. Whitlock as to whether or not this will in effect solve our troubles in the main.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

On the 18th February Lloyd George informed Hoover that his Government had decided to recommend to their French Allies a budgetary allowance to the Belgian Government

[11] This plan was never put into effect.

which included £1,000,000 each month for the Belgian relief program.[12] Unquestionably this formal recognition and financial support of the C.R.B. by the British Government had considerable bearing on the subsequent attitude of the French Government toward caring for their people through the Commission. Ribot's guarded statement[13] to the Commission's representative on the 26th February indicated that Hoover must now turn to the Belgian Government for finances for the French program, but it was not until a month later, on the 26th March 1915, that the question of finance for the North of France was actually put in order, as the following documents show.

DOCUMENT NO. 273

Telegram, HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, *stating the immediate need of funds*

LONDON, 18 March 1915

MR. A. VAN DE VYVERE
MINISTER OF FINANCE, HAVRE

Owing to rapid exhaustion of food supplies which are available for purchase, it is necessary for us to enter into immediate contracts if we are to assure the delivery of foodstuffs for the months of May and June. Our liabilities already exceed our cash available by over £1,000,000, and we cannot induce merchants to accept our further contracts for shipping and purchasing of wheat, flour, et cetera, unless we have further resources at once. I have no objection to incurring any amount of personal liability in this work, but I simply cannot obtain further credit, and it is highly important that we should at once make contracts for at least £500,000 further purchases for Belgian account, and I should be glad to know if we can expect early transfer. As to French position it will cost approximately £300,000[14] per month to supply the French population north of lines; and in order to enable us to purchase supplies for immediate delivery and make contracts abroad for delivery, which will require two to three months, we need from them for their particular account at least £900,000 immediate cash, as it is necessary to expend this amount of money within the next fortnight in order to secure their supplies, and thereafter would want £300,000 per month for two months, making a total of £1,500,000 to supply their population until end of July. We can secure supplies if they will place us in a financial position to do so. We should be glad for them to appoint any responsible man to sit on the Commission, supervise the whole of

[12] Chapter iv, Document 147. One-half of this was to be borne by the French Treasury.

[13] Document 268.

[14] Chapter iii, Document 67.

our transactions on their behalf, and if they desire to appoint someone of this character I would suggest that you consider Monsieur L. Chevrillon, 23 rue de la Paix, Paris, who has been of material assistance to us in our work and who should be well known to Mr. Delcassé.

HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 274

Memorandum by SENGIER[15] *of interviews with* M. DELCASSÉ, FRENCH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND M. RIBOT, *concerning the failure of the additional subsidy from France to come through the Belgian Government*

PARIS, 22 March 1915

PRESENT: Messrs. Hoover, Francqui,[16] Sengier.

Mr. Delcassé was very surprised to hear from Mr. Francqui that the Belgian Government had not notified the C.R.B. that the French Cabinet had come to a satisfactory understanding with regard to the feeding of the civil population of the French occupied territory. The matter of settling finance being not in his sphere, it was arranged for a meeting with Mr. Ribot, Minister of Finance. Mr. Francqui and Mr. Homberg (Vice-President of the Banque de l'Union Parisienne, at present attached to the Ministry of Finance) called on Mr. Ribot the same afternoon. As a result of their visit the following memorandum was written out:

"The French Government wishes to have no official relations with the Commission for Relief in Belgium nor with the Comité National; but it would be grateful to these two organizations kindly to help the civil population on its occupied territory.

"Messrs. Delcassé and Ribot declared that Mr. Viviani had already come to an agreement with Mr. de Broqueville that the Belgian Government should draw and place at the disposal of the Commission for Relief, upon the credit of 250,000,000 francs opened for the Belgian Government at the Bank of France, all sums necessary to the feeding of the necessitous population of the North of France.

"The Belgian Government will deduct from the credit of 250,000,000 francs the sums thus drawn. On the other hand, the credit at the Bank of France will be finally increased by an equal amount, so that the sums placed at the disposal of the Belgian Government for its own needs, will not thus suffer any diminution.

[15] E. Sengier, Finance Department of the Commission's London office.

[16] After Hoover had been assured of financial support by the British and French Governments for the Belgian work, he asked Francqui to come to London for a conference on the details of accounting and the responsibilities of the Commission, the Comité National, and the Belgian Government in respect to the new funds. At this time, moreover, the whole matter of continuing relief was in the balance as a result of the British threat to withdraw their consent to the operation unless Hoover secured guarantees respecting the coming Belgian harvest, which the Germans appeared unwilling to give. See chapter viii.

"In order to follow up all these arrangements, it is indispensable that Mr. Van de Vyvere should immediately place at the disposal of the Commission for Relief in Belgium a sum equivalent to one million pounds sterling, the amount necessary for the purchases to be effected without delay. Furthermore, monthly, and for the first time on 1st April next, a sum equivalent to £400,000 sterling will be required."

"E. FRANCQUI"

[*Translation*]

It was understood that Mr. Sengier, on behalf of the C.R.B., would leave immediately for Havre and arrange with the Belgian Government for the carrying out of the agreement set out in this memo. This memo not stating any definite amount of money but "all sums" of money necessary to carry on the feeding of the French population, it was decided that Mr. Sengier should obtain from the Belgian Government an amount of £1,000,000 working capital considered necessary by Mr. Hoover to start the work on a business basis, a further £400,000 to be supplied every month.

It was also understood that the French Government should send its representatives to Mr. Klobukowski, Minister of France, at Ste. Adresse,[17] and hand him a copy of said memorandum.

DOCUMENT NO. 275

Letter, FRANCQUI TO VAN DE VYVERE, *concerning the subsidies from the French Government for Northern France*

PARIS, 23 March 1915

Monsieur Van de Vyvere
Minister of Finance, Havre

M. LE MINISTRE:

I have the honor to send you, as an enclosure, a memorandum drawn up as the result of conversations which I had yesterday with MM. Delcassé and Ribot. This memorandum defines the arrangements come to between the French Government and M. de Broqueville, relative to the subsidies to be allowed for the revictualing of the civil population in occupied French territory.

M. O. Homberg, who accompanied me at the time of my visit to M. Ribot, will semi-officially write to M. Klobukowski to inform him of the definite arrangements in the present memorandum.

I entrust the present document to M. Sengier and I trust that you will hand him a cheque for £500,000 which you kindly promised to cover our March needs, as well as a cheque for £1,000,000 destined for the purchase of provisions necessary for the French population.

M. Hoover and myself have obtained at Paris new information.[18]

[17] The seat of the Belgian Government at Havre.

[18] There was a shortage of food supplies in the world's markets at this time. See Document 273.

from which we draw the conclusion that it is indispensable, if we do not wish to have serious trouble, to make immediately the purchases which are to insure the revictualing for June and July; to this end it is urgent that we should receive the sums asked for.

I thank you, M. le Ministre, for all the support which you are giving us, and beg you to accept, etc., etc.

(Signed) E. FRANCQUI

P.S. At the last moment M. Homberg informs me that the French Government will send tomorrow to Havre an official who will inform M. Klobukowski fully.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 276

Memorandum, by SENGIER, *of meetings, on the 23d–26th March 1915, with* VAN DE VYVERE *regarding French subsidy.* VAN DE VYVERE *acts without complete instructions from the French Government*

[Havre, 26 March 1915]

Mr. Sengier arrived in Havre on the 23d. En route from Paris to Havre he met Messrs. Van de Vyvere and Liebaert who told him that they had just seen Mr. Ribot and that they were authorized to hand to the C.R.B. an amount of £300,000. Mr. Sengier did not discuss the matter very fully that night but made an appointment for next day and then produced before Mr. Van de Vyvere the memo in which it was stated that the Belgian Government should hand to the C.R.B. all the moneys necessary to carry on this work. Mr. Van de Vyvere, knowing from Mr. Ribot that he could give £300,000 only, refused to hand over the money asked for until he had received through Mr. Klobukowski proper notification from the French Government.

Mr. Sengier stayed in Havre the 24th and 25th, waiting for the French Government's delegates to turn up. On the 25th he had telegraphed to Mr. Homberg without reply; on the 26th Mr. Sengier insisted again upon the absolute necessity of receiving above money at once; Mr. Van de Vyvere then, notwithstanding he had no notification, consented to hand him the Frs. 25,000,000 accompanied by a note requesting Mr. Hoover's agreement to the terms of the advance.

DOCUMENT NO. 277

Note, VAN DE VYVERE TO HOOVER, *stating the conditions under which the Belgian Government is advancing twenty-five million francs to the C.R.B. for provisioning the North of France*

[Havre, 26 March 1915]

The Belgian Government, in conformity with the views of the French Government, advances to the C.R.B. a sum of 25 million francs, for which the French Government will reimburse it later.

This sum is destined for the immediate purchase of a stock of provisions for provisioning the invaded part of France. The capital of Frs. 25,000,000 must be renewed by the sale of provisions at cost price to the population of the French invaded departments—unless the French Government gives formal authorization to gratuitously dispose of a part of the foodstuffs.

I desire that Mr. Hoover, President of the C.R.B., notify me of his agreement on this point pending fuller instructions.

(Signed) A. Van de Vyvere
Minister of Finance

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 278

Extract of telegram, Hoover to Gerard, *asking latter to secure undertaking from the German Government that imported foodstuffs will not be interfered with in Northern France*

London, 9 March 1915

Relief Commission, Rotterdam

Please send following telegram to Gerard:

Am able to secure subscription considerable sums of money from charitable institutions[19] for feeding French people south of Belgian frontier. In order, however, to secure this money it is necessary for me to create a special department Commission for Relief in Belgium in co-operation with National Committee in Brussels in order that foodstuffs and funds may be handled and accounted for properly. It is also necessary that we should have undertaking from German Government that these foodstuffs will not be interfered with in any manner and that we shall be allowed to place in this territory at least five American members of Commission and shall have the right to move about in full superintendence of the work of distribution. I am not allowed to proceed with shipments until I have these guarantees in hand, and as the matter is one of urgent humanitarian interest I trust that you will again lend us your kindly services and that the German Government will meet us in a liberal and prompt manner.[20] . . . .

Hoover

Two weeks passed without reply from Gerard. In the meantime Hoover heard that the Germans would allow only neutral officers in uniform to act as the Commission's repre-

[19] See Document 271 and footnote.

[20] See chapter ii, Document 34, for complete text of this telegram.

sentatives in the Army Zone. He thereupon telegraphed Gerard asking if this were true and offering to attempt to secure American Army officers if the Imperial Government so desired. Still without news from Berlin, Hoover wired Van Dyke at The Hague asking him to relay these proposals to Gerard and to urge prompt action from the German authorities as conditions in the French provinces were growing rapidly worse, while the Commission though ready to move supplies at once was unable to act until the German guarantees were received. As the following documents indicate, the delay was due to interchanges between Berlin and the German authorities in Belgium and Northern France rather than to the formulation of new proposals relating to the Commission's methods of supervision.

DOCUMENT NO. 279

Extract of letter, VON BISSING TO FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN, *giving his observations on the proposed relief in Northern France in connection with the work in Belgium*

BRUSSELS, 21 March 1915

Foreign Office, Berlin

I desire to make the following observations, as far as I am concerned, in answer to the note of the American Ambassador, Mr. Gerard, which has been transmitted to me.

As regards the feeding of the French population south of the Belgian frontier, I give, for my part, the express and formal declaration that the provisions which the Commission for Relief in Belgium in association with the Comité National in Belgium may introduce into France through the occupied territory from neutral countries abroad will remain free from all military requisitioning.

Likewise, I am inclined to believe that, should these goods be transported through territory occupied by troops on the firing line or in the zone back of this line in East or West Flanders, the competent military authorities in such districts would be prepared to furnish the necessary assurances as far as they are concerned.

. . . . I must lay stress upon the fact that the feeding of the districts of Northern France must not be carried out by drawing on the reserves destined for Belgium, and I therefore suggest that precautions be taken through marking the sacks, etc., whereby the supplies destined for France which may lie temporarily in Belgian depots, will be separated strictly from those destined for Belgium.

. . . . . .

(Signed) FREIHERR VON BISSING

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 280

Letter, VON JAGOW TO GERARD, *stating that there would be no objection to neutral civilian delegates*

FOREIGN OFFICE, BERLIN
21 March 1915

MY DEAR EXCELLENCY:

In reply to your esteemed query of the 17th instant, I have the honor to inform you that Germany does not require that the distribution of provisions to the population in the French districts occupied by the German forces should be made under the supervision of neutral officers in uniform. In view of the experiences in Belgium, we would also admit to the French districts neutral commissioners without uniform. Should the American Government, however, attach much value to the fact that, in the event of the taking over of the provisioning of the said districts it be represented by two or three American officers in uniform, no objection would be made on the part of Germany. Preliminary notification, however, of the names of the gentlemen whose admittance is desired would be appreciated.

I am happy to avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

(Signed) VON JAGOW

[*Translation*]

On the basis of the general engagement of the Berlin Government given above and on that of the military authorities which follows, the Commission began at once to move food supplies into the North of France. Distribution began in the districts of Valenciennes on the 6th April and in Lille four days later. Other regions were penetrated in the succeeding weeks, the last points to be reached being Guise and Ternier, where the first deliveries were made on the 6th May.

The preliminary agreement with the German Army authorities (given immediately below) was unsatisfactory to the Commission and was not acceptable to the British,[21] who for the time being did not go beyond an expression of disapproval. On the 13th April the Commission secured a new and more satisfactory agreement (Document 283) which defined the relationship between the Commission, the French committees, and the German authorities.

The local distribution organization which came into being in Northern France through the auspices of the C.R.B. was the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, usually

[21] See chapter viii, Documents 326 and 327.

referred to as the Comité Français (C.F.). In structure the Comité Français resembled the Comité National of Belgium, but under the conditions of German rule in French territory, the activities of the C.F. were severely restricted. There was a central committee,[22] with headquarters at Brussels, which was primarily an accounting rather than an executive agency. Central control was exercised through the Brussels office of the C.R.B. For each of the six zones controlled by the six German armies between Verdun and the sea there was a district committee. Each of the six districts was further subdivided into regions containing a group of communes, and for each region there was a regional committee. These district and regional committees handled the details of distribution under the limitations of German orders and in close co-operation with the representatives of the C.R.B. There were in the administration of French relief no diplomatic patrons representing the relief organizations and no German officials representing the German civil government. The Commission's delegates[23] dealt directly with the military authorities under whose very strict observation they performed strenuous but interesting duties.

DOCUMENT NO. 281

Memorandum, of conference between Major General Zoellner and Connett, *regarding relief of Northern France*

Conference

At General Headquarters on the 21st March 1915, morning

Present: Major General Zoellner, representing the Commander in Chief of the Army, and

Mr. A. N. Connett, representing the C.R.B. (Commission for Relief in Belgium)

1. Mr. Hoover's telegram, dated London, 18th March 1915, concerning the supervision of the distribution of foodstuffs to the

[22] After the evacuation of Northern France by the Germans, the Comité Français was reconstituted into the Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées, with headquarters at Lille. This committee was dissolved in late 1919 when the provisioning of the North of France by the Commission ceased.

[23] Document 315 in chapter vii describes the work of the delegates in France. Dr. Vernon Kellogg, who was chief Representative in France and later Director of the Commission in Belgium, has written interestingly and vividly of these days in his *Headquarters Nights.*

civilian population of the portions of Northern France occupied by the German army was produced and discussed.

2. The German army administration agree in principle that American officials in uniform act in the manner proposed as supervisors for the activities of the C.R.B.

3. The German army administration gives the assurance that in no case will the goods be claimed for the needs of the army, but that they will be solely used for the civilian population of the occupied portions of France.

4. The German army administration has requisitioned and given receipts for the foodstuffs for man and beast existing in Northern France, so that all stocks have passed to the possession of the German army administration. Therefore no stocks whatsoever any longer exist which belong to the French population, with the exception of poultry and vegetables in the gardens. To exclude any misunderstandings, the fact must therefore be stated, that the claiming for army purposes of the stocks now already requisitioned, should not be regarded as a new requisition. The most indispensable foodstuffs for man and beast have hitherto been delivered to the population by the Germans in strictly specified rations.

5. With regard to the utilization of the new crop, the German army administration has a free hand, because, by supplying seed and furnishing labor, horses, motor plows, and so on, the administration itself effects the things essential to the securing of the crop, and furnishes compensation for the use of the land and of French labor.

6. The German army administration assures the C.R.B. of the greatest liberality in regard to freight charges and will grant at least the same concessions as for the provisioning of Belgium.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 282

Letter, Hoover to Chevrillon, *outlining proposed extension of relief to Northern France*

London, 8 April 1915

L. Chevrillon, Esq.
Paris

My dear Chevrillon:

I have asked Mr. John White to go at once to Brussels and take up with the head of our Belgian organization, Mr. Crosby, the whole question of extending the organization to the French sections, and Mr. Guérin is in Brussels at the present moment in conference with them.

From a study of the transportation, both by our office here and the one at Rotterdam, we are proposing to establish a central distribution station at Lille, one at Cambrai, perhaps one at La Fére, and another at Mézières. We are despatching the most experienced men we have in Belgium to take charge of these stations and we are also

shipping material toward these points by canal. We are expecting the French people to divide the territory up into proper provinces from a transportation point of view and to appoint a French director to act jointly with the American. Our first duty, however, was to get foodstuff landed on the ground; we can formulate the organization as we go along.

We are sending you today copy of this week's report which contains a complete description of the Belgian method of distribution, which we expect by degrees to establish over France, so far as it is physically possible.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 283

Agreements, between the Supreme Command of the German Army *at request of the* Quartermaster General (*represented by* Major von Kessler) *and the* C.R.B. (*represented by* O. T. Crosby and A. N. Connett), *regarding the provisioning of the population in the occupied French territory*

Brussels, 13 April 1915

Main Agreement

1. The German Commander-in-Chief gives his consent for the C.R.B. to undertake the supply of the population of the occupied French territory with foodstuffs.

2. The German Commander-in-Chief gives the assurance that the goods imported for the said purpose will never be called upon for the use of the German Army, but shall be used solely for the French population of the occupied territory. The German Commander-in-Chief will issue strict orders to all the respective subordinate authorities to the effect that these goods must never be seized.

Any goods which may not have been distributed at any time will remain at the exclusive disposal of the C.R.B.

3. The C.R.B. is authorized to appoint in the occupied territory of Northern France, American citizens as its delegates, who may, subject to the supplementary agreement No. 1 attached hereto, satisfy themselves of the carrying out of the assurance given under paragraph 2.

4. The requests to the C.R.B. for, and the distribution of the goods will be effected according to the determinations of the C.R.B., in conjunction with the German military authorities, by French trustees, who are to be nominated by the French communities, subject to the approval of the German military authorities and of the C.R.B. These trustees will represent the French communities in the transactions with the delegates of the C.R.B., more particularly in connection with accounts and payments.

5. The German Commander-in-Chief will afford every facility for the carriage of the goods to the place of destination. The goods will

be admitted free of duty, and freight will be charged according to similar principles as may, from time to time, be in force for the supply of Belgium.

The transport is regulated by the supplementary agreement No. 2 attached hereto.

6. In order to eliminate doubts as to origin and destination of the goods supplied, all means of transport and storing rooms will be labeled officially by the German military authorities in such a manner as to make the goods recognizable as those covered by the stipulations of paragraph 2.

7. If military exigencies should so require, this agreement may be canceled by the German Commander-in-Chief at any time without giving any reasons, by a notice to that effect to the C.R.B. However, all goods imported by the C.R.B., then being already within the occupied French territory, shall be disposed of in accordance with the stipulations of this agreement, the American delegates remaining long enough to discharge their duties with respect to such goods, in so far as this is considered practicable for military reasons.

8. The right of the German military authorities to requisition for military purposes against "Bons" the foodstuffs for men or animals still existing in the country is in no way affected by this agreement.

Likewise, the German military authorities reserve to themselves all rights in respect to the new crop.

(S.) VON KESSLER, Major
(S.) OSCAR T. CROSBY

[*Translation*]

SUPPLEMENTARY AGREEMENT NO. 1

Respecting the position of the Delegates of the C.R.B. in the occupied French Territory

1. The delegates of the C.R.B. are authorized to satisfy themselves that the goods supplied by the C.R.B. are being used in accordance with the guarantees given.

2. The German military authorities will afford them every possible assistance in the carrying out of this duty. On the other hand, for military reasons, they will be expected to limit themselves to such matters as are within the scope of their duties.

3. The delegates are aware that their activities in the zone of the field army will have to be subjected to certain restrictions. These will be fixed as binding by the military authorities, wholly in respect of the military situation at the time being.

4. There will be established in the occupied territory:

A Central Office and
Five Distribution Districts

5. In each place, two gentlemen of American nationality will be admitted, as selected by the C.R.B.

If desired, they will receive, free of charge, quarters, officers' rations, and suitable attendance. A military motor car will be placed

at their disposal for the journeys necessitated by their duties. Every gentleman will be granted a passport guaranteeing his personal safety.

6. At the Central Office, a delegate of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, who is in charge of the accounts of the C.R.B., will be admitted in the place of one of the two American delegates.

The selection of the person is subject to the approval of the German Commander-in-Chief.

7. To each place an officer, speaking English and French, will be attached, who will be detailed exclusively for this duty. He has to accompany the delegates on their journeys, for their personal safety, and will generally assist them in every possible way.

8. The Distribution Districts established as per paragraph 4 will be divided into subdistricts. For each subdistrict there will be selected a Chief Place, where trustees of French nationality will be nominated in accordance with paragraph 4 of the main agreement.

9. The delegates are authorized to visit these trustees at the Chief Places for purposes of supervision and accounts, and there to receive the representatives of the communes of the subdistricts personally. This authorization may temporarily be restricted by the military authorities, if the military situation so requires it. However, in such cases, the delegates shall be at liberty to summon the representatives of the communes for discussion of business to the delegate's place of residence through the medium of the military authorities.

10. All correspondence, including the personal correspondence of the delegates, has to be handed open to the attached officer, who will forward it by the quickest means and in the zone of the Imperial Post, free of postage. The use of the military telegraphs and telephones will be allowed through the medium of the attached officer; no fees will be charged.

11. Upon entering upon his position, every delegate will certify by his own signature that he has been acquainted with the above stipulations. At the same time, he takes upon himself the obligation to carry out his duties in such a manner as may be expected from an honorable citizen of a neutral state.

(S.) von Kessler, Major
(S.) Oscar T. Crosby

[*Translation*]

Supplementary Agreement No. 2

Concerning the transportation of the goods supplied by the C.R.B.

1. As far as possible, the transportation shall take place by water. No tolls are to be paid for the use of the waterways. The payment of the freight to the lightermen is a matter of the C.R.B. Special regulations will be fixed for the granting of passes for the lightermen.

2. For the shipment by rail of foodstuffs for man and beast, the German Railway Administration in Brussels will demand no more than 50 per cent of normal freight rates. The same reduction of rates

will apply to the return of empty bags. The minimum freight for one car is frs. 9. For cars which are delayed during the loading or unloading, the full demurrage, as specified by the tariffs, must be paid.

3. The waybills accompanying the rail shipments must contain a regular attestation, made in accordance with the decision of the German Railway Administration, and stating that the goods are destined for the French civilian population.

4. The railway cars used for the transportation must be provided with labels which show that the contents are the property of the C.R.B.

5. All means of distinguishing the goods, as labels, etc., are to be supplied by the C.R.B., in agreement with the German Railway Administration.

6. The loaded railway cars will be delivered, sealed, at destination. Delegates of the C.R.B. will not be allowed to accompany cars or trains in transit.

7. Applications for the necessary railway cars must reach the stationmaster at least two or three days beforehand. The German Railway Administration do not guarantee the supply of the cars; however, they will as far as possible attend to the needs of the C.R.B.

(S.) von Kessler, Major
(S.) Oscar T. Crosby

[*Translation*]

3. *Administration. April 1915—February 1916*

The organization of the work in the French districts followed a course similar in many respects to that in Belgium. But as the following documents show, conditions in France produced their own problems. It was for example less easy to organize the local committees since the greater part of the adult male population had either been mobilized in the French Army or had been virtually made prisoners by the Germans. This removal of the family bread-winners combined with the almost total suspension of industry in preponderantly industrial communities produced a relatively greater degree of destitution than was found in Belgium. The Commission's negotiations to secure indigenous crops for the French population, difficult in any case, were further complicated by the fact that the German armies had actually cultivated the fields in some districts and had furnished seed in others.[24] Very delicate questions of policy arose from the efforts of some German commanders to force French civilians to labor on projects of military value to the forces of

[24] Chapter viii.

occupation. Finally there were administrative complications due to the fact that in addition to the Commission, the French Government and the Comité Français, the Belgian Government, the Comité National, and the British Foreign Office were in a greater or less degree involved in the enterprise.

DOCUMENT NO. 284

Letter, HOOVER TO DE FLEURIAU, *stating program of the work in Northern France and some of the difficulties encountered*

LONDON, 23 April 1915

A. de Fleuriau, Esq., French Embassy, London

DEAR MR. DE FLEURIAU:

With regard to the information which you asked for yesterday, I beg to enclose copies of the arrangements entered into between our staff and the German General Staff with regard to the distribution of foodstuffs in Northern France. This agreement was in substitution of a very unsatisfactory "treaty" entered into early in March.

We have established headquarters for our operations with necessary warehouses, at Mézières, Bethel, Vervins, St. Quentin, Valenciennes, Maubeuge, and we are still negotiating with regard to placing representatives at Lille. This city is, however, so close to the firing line that the Germans do not seem as yet ready to approve and insist that we shall feed the people at Lille from Valenciennes warehouses. Foodstuffs have some time since been moving into these warehouses in considerable quantities. It is not our policy, however, to carry more than four or five days' supplies at any one of them.

Our staff report that they have the greatest possible difficulties in the organization of the detailed distribution by virtue of the fact that all capable Frenchmen have necessarily been drafted out of the country, either into the army, or refugees, or as prisoners, and consequently we can never expect to set up so highly organized and efficient a service in the detailed distribution as that maintained in Belgium. Furthermore, we had hoped to establish, at least partially, the system employed in Belgium by which that portion of the population which still has some resources in money could pay for their breadstuffs and these payments coming back into our hands through Belgium would enable us to revolve our funds to advantage and, to some extent, minimize the amount of support we should need to receive from outside. Owing to the great impoverishment of the population and the drafting out of the more able people, however, it seems hopeless for us to establish organization to effect this result to any great extent.

As I informed you yesterday, a theoretical calculation of the minimum ration of the remaining people in this section would involve,

at the present high cost of food supplies, something in the neighborhood of £700,000 a month. On the other hand we should certainly have difficulties in reaching the entire population and we have calculated we could carry the business on with £500,000 per month.

As I explained to you yesterday, our accounts are entirely in the hands of the well-known firm of Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, who also for our purposes maintain the American members of their firm in Belgium. We keep our accounts with respect to the French population entirely separate from the Belgian and will be able, at the completion of this work, to show the exact cost of every particle of foodstuffs, its destination, any money which we may have received for it, and otherwise a complete and entire statement of the position, which no doubt will be presented to the French Government by the Belgian Government, to whom we look in this matter.

I regret to say that some misrepresentation has got abroad in Northern France that this is a commercial enterprise, and I hope that no such impression has reached your Government. The whole of this Commission is carried on by voluntary effort, without remuneration of any kind, and the members of the Commission would not for one moment consent to be placed in such a position. The value of volunteer effort will be shown by the fact that we have been able to fix the price at which flour is to be sold to those who can still afford to pay in Northern France, at about 52 centimes per kilo, and it may interest you to know that the retail price of flour in London today is 53 centimes. If any profit is made on the sale of the flour to the better-to-do population in Northern France, this profit will automatically go in reduction of the loss made in supplying the destitute.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 285

Letter, HOOVER TO DE FLEURIAU, *announcing the suspension by the C.R.B. of food shipments to Lille and Roubaix as a consequence of German efforts to make French civilians work for German troops*

LONDON, 2 July 1915

A. de Fleuriau, Esq.
The French Embassy, London

DEAR MR. DE FLEURIAU:

We beg to inform you that we are this morning advised that on Wednesday last our direction in Northern France stopped the whole of the food supplies in transit to the Lille and Roubaix districts, involving about 600,000 people. This was in consequence of a threat[25]

[25] The German threat was withdrawn and there was no suspension in the feeding.

given to the people of Roubaix by the military authorities that unless they made sacks (for sand bags) for the German army, the Germans would themselves hold up our food supplies for the city of Roubaix. Under the undertaking imposed upon us by the Allied Powers with regard to this work, we feel that it is our duty to obtain further instructions from you as to continuing the ravitaillement in view of the above incident.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 286

Letter, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *regarding progress of work in Northern France and some of its special problems*

LONDON, 7 July 1915

Louis Chevrillon, Esq., Paris

DEAR CHEVRILLON:

I have been back from Belgium and Northern France for about a week. When I left Belgium we had practically completed a detailed report of the whole of the operations, organization, and everything of the kind in Northern France. I had expected it would follow me out two days later and I should be able to place before you the whole situation in a clear form. Something has held the matter up, but I hope the report will arrive in a day or two.

In a general way the whole country is well organized and the French committees are doing good and efficient work. They are keeping accurate accounts and the food distribution has penetrated into all sections of occupied France, even as far south as that section east of St. Die, where we have a local committee doing active work and receiving regular shipments. The problem is one of larger administration than we ever anticipated, as the population are practically destitute of all necessaries and I do not see how we can pull them through with £500,000 per month. It is in view of the presence of this fact and the whole question as to how long and under what circumstances we are to continue that I have hoped to have the data.

Mr. Guérin has been trying to get a pass to go out to Paris where I had expected to meet him with you.

We are having some trouble of a diplomatic character and you will please find enclosed copy of a letter which I addressed to the French Embassy here. The case is somewhat parallel with the matter you raised and on which I feel that we should have precise instructions from the French Government. I do not feel that it is for us, as a body of neutrals, to be threatening the Germans with vengeance of one kind and another, and I hate to see the food supplies cut off in large sections in endeavors to intimidate the Germans. Altogether, many difficulties are accumulating and one of them is constantly raising friction between the French and Belgian National Committees.

For your confidential information, I believe the French people are quite capable of carrying out their own enterprise now and they would be glad to be dissociated entirely from the Belgian section. The system which our men have put into action, and which the French committees have now well seized upon and are carrying out with great circumspection, will result in the French Government being able, if it so desires, to collect the entire expenditure in Northern France from the communes after the war, so that the whole business has been reduced to a matter, practically, of the French Government making loans to these communes and should not be looked upon as benevolences.

There is another feature of this business which it seems to me should be planed out and that is the illusion that the money is being provided from an Alice in Wonderland idea—that Belgians are providing the money. Every German and Frenchman in Northern France knows perfectly well that this money is all provided directly by the French Government or indirectly by the French banking institutions, as advances to the communes, and if it could be advanced one stage further and the advances made direct to us from the French Government it would save us a lot of circumlocution.

I hope to be able to write you much more fully at an early date.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 287

Letter, HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, *giving general report on French relief and asking him to secure instructions from the French Government regarding continuation and general agreement with the methods in force*

LONDON, 12 July 1915

Monsieur A. Van de Vyvere
Belgian Minister of Finance, Havre

DEAR SIR:

I have now had the advantage of intimate consultation on the whole French position, with (*a*) Mr. Crosby, the head of our organization, and Messrs. Chadbourn and Kellogg, his principal assistants in the Northern France work; also with several of the American departmental heads; (*b*) with Mr. Guérin, the head of the Comité du Nord de la France; and (*c*) Messrs. Francqui and Van Bree of the Comité National; and I desire to present our combined views on the food necessities of the French people in this region.

1. *Remaining Population.*—For the purpose of our administration, the occupied French territory has been divided into six districts by

the German military authorities. These districts have civil populations estimated by us, from considerable experience, as follows:

Lille	660,000
Valenciennes	620,000
St. Quentin	330,000
Vervins	290,000
Charleville	150,000
Longwy	105,000
Maubeuge	100,000*
Givet-Fumay	30,000†
Total	2,285,000

* Assigned for provisioning to the Province of Hainaut.
† Assigned for provisioning to the Province of Namur.

2. *Food Requirements.*—The almost total exhaustion of local foodstuffs makes the imported requirements larger and more costly pro rata of the population than the work in Belgium where there remains a large store of native food. Careful investigation and infinite consideration indicate that the very minimum ration on which this population can be kept alive is as follows:

	Daily ration *(grams)*	Invoiced to the committees at *(Frs. per kilo)*	Selling price to public *(Frs. per ration)*
Flour (bread)	190	0.52	0.12
Rice	20	0.45	0.01
Legumes	20	0.70	0.02
Coffee	20	2.50	0.05
Salt	10	0.07	...
Sugar	10	0.85	0.01
Lard	30	2.00	0.07
Bacon	30	2.00	0.07
Total	..	....	0.35

If these rations be applied to the above population, it will be seen that there will be required:

	Metric tons		Metric tons
Flour	12,988	Rice	1,367
Legumes	1,367	Coffee	1,367
Salt	683	Sugar	683
Grease (or lard)	2,050	Bacon	2,050

The cost to the population, at the above prices, of the whole of these foodstuffs amounts to about

Frs. 24,000,000 per month.

The material which is now being furnished was purchased in the months of April and May, as it was necessary to provide supplies at this time sufficient to last until about the end of August. The prices at which some of these foodstuffs were purchased were very high, but if the work is to continue the wheat supplies will be purchased at a lower rate from the 1915 crop and thus a saving of at least 25 per cent can be made on this item, or, in other words, the above budget may, after the middle of September, be reduced to approximately Frs. 21,000,000 or Frs. 22,000,000 per month. I attach hereto a table showing these rations worked out in detail.

3. *Consumption to Date.*—Owing to the prohibition on the export from European countries, it requires from two to three months after we have decided to purchase to effect delivery into Northern France from North and South American markets. Therefore we have not yet, except in the matter of flour, rice, and legumes, delivered the whole of this ration, as we have not been able to accumulate sufficient supplies. Furthermore, although delivery to the principal centers began in April it did not absolutely reach to such remote districts as that east of St. Die until June. I hold an acknowledgment, as per copy enclosed, from the Comité du Nord de la France, that they have consumed to the 30th June foodstuffs to the value of Frs. 19,782,310.75.

4. *Total Funds.*—I have received the following sums for French account:

27th March	Frs. 25,000,000	which realized £978,761. 2. 6
10th May	Frs. 12,500,000	which realized £481,498. 19. 6
29th June	Frs. 12,500,000	not yet all realized

And I understand that I am to receive Frs. 12,500,000 for each of the months of July and August, or a total credit of Frs. 75,000,000.

The difference between the sums received to date and goods consumed is invested in partial payments on account for foodstuffs in the course of transit, these foodstuffs being en route all the way from Buenos Aires and Chicago to Northern France.

If, for purposes of calculation, we assume Frs. 20,000,000 expended up to the end of June, we have an outstanding balance of Frs. 55,000,000 available, or at the rate of Frs. 20,000,000 per month, this will be sufficient to carry the business until some time in the month of September; and from that time on it will be necessary to increase our allowance on French account if we are to carry this population on the above ration. There is no doubt in our minds that the minimum sum we can proceed with, from September 1st, is Frs. 20,000,000[26] per month, instead of Frs. 12,500,000 that we now receive.

5. *Period of Continuance.*—The harvest results, so far as the civil population is concerned, are going to be negligible. Owing to the

[26] The 20,000,000 francs were received in September and thereafter as requested.

absence of able-bodied men, the harvest will be small (the German Army has planted considerable areas which they inform us were abandoned). It is, of course, understood what the attitude of the German Army will be with regard to requisitions, but it cannot be counted upon with any confidence as a relief measure. It must be observed also that a considerable portion of the "ration" is of imported material and would be required in any event. Our general view is that, while the individual peasant may hold all or a portion of his crop—if any—there is unlikely to be anything much for villages or towns, and if the conditions which existed in March are not to recur then the work must go on steadily through the autumn, regardless of the harvest.

We should be glad to receive an indication of intention as we must now give orders for September supplies.

6. *Financial Measures Now in Force.*—The foodstuffs, on arrival in Northern France, are debited by us to the Comité du Nord. They are then redebited by the Comité du Nord to the Regional Committees and by the Regional Committees to the commune. The communes, in turn, sell to the population but as there is no real money in circulation a series of local currencies is availed of. We had originally hoped to extract some real money from the population so that the credit given us could, at least in part, serve as a revolving fund, but this has had to be abandoned.

I will not trouble you with details of how the communes get an obligation from the citizens but two important facts stand out: (1) a communal obligation to pay for the whole of the foodstuffs is secured; and (2) we have so far required an additional guarantee that the foodstuffs would be ultimately paid for by exacting an undertaking on the personal responsibility of the members of the Regional Committees. Therefore, the French Institutions[27] could, after the war is over, collect the entire amount advanced us, from the communes, and thus the whole of the present transactions are in the nature of loans from the French Institutions, as a banker to the communes. Some little feeling has arisen over the additional personal guarantees that we have required, and while these were essential in the early stages of organization in order to impose a proper system of obligation on the communes, it is possible that we have now reached a stage where the entire working out of the distribution of obligation may be left to the Comité du Nord. I enclose herewith copy of one of the personal obligations which are required to be signed by Comité members. I also enclose note from Monsieur Guérin on the question of abandoning these personal obligations. We should be glad to have instructions on this point.

It has been our desire to complete this enterprise to the satisfaction of the people of France and we have therefore imposed upon the people in the North a rather exacting organization, and there is some

[27] The name used to indicate the source of funds for the relief of Northern France, which was in reality the French Government.

tendency to be restive in the matter of these guarantees. I am in hopes that Mr. Guérin will be able to go to Paris where he can lay before the French Institutions his views on the matter. Now that the committees throughout the country are doing good and useful work and the financial system is well understood and executed, I see no reason why the French Institutions should not open their financial relations a little more directly with their own people. We require a detailed monthly report from each Regional Committee and hope in due time to transmit you these reports.

7. *Exchange.*—The question of exchange is becoming most important. In dealing with Belgium and Northern France we use the uniform figure of Frs. 25.40 to the £, for two reasons: First, it would be hopeless for us, in such widespread and remote operations to follow the course of exchange; and, secondly, and most important, if we followed the rise in exchange we should be compelled to increase the price of foodstuffs accordingly. That this matter is likely to become a matter of importance will appear from a small calculation: the first two remittances which we received from you, aggregating Frs. 37,500,000, realized £1,460,260. 2. 0, through the Banque Belge. At 25.40, this represents only Frs. 37,088,604 and is so in our accounts with the Comité du Nord, this being the basis of exchange, and there will probably work out a loss.

8. As explained to you, on arrival in Northern France, the foodstuffs are debited to the Comité du Nord at prices fixed by us. The price which we fix in North France, we estimate to be wide enough to cover cost of purchase and transport. I need not remark that this being a volunteer organization there is no intended profit. However, in handling this quantity of foodstuffs from so many different markets and under so many kinds of quotations, it would be entirely impossible to indent them to the Comité du Nord at the variable figures of cost, because, for one reason, the foodstuffs arrive and are consumed before we can make up an accurate statement of the actual cost. It may prove, however, that there is a margin of profit which can be used to adjust exchange matters, but this cannot be determined until the work is complete or, at least, until the work is advanced to where we can review some long previous data. In any event, I propose that when this enterprise is completed, our accountants, Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, should determine what has been the actual cost of the foodstuffs delivered to the Comité du Nord and any balance between the actual expenditure and the obligations taken by us can be settled in cash.

In Conclusion, we should like instructions on the following points:

1. Are we to continue the work beyond the present credit of Frs. 75,000,000?

2. Are we authorized to expend up to Frs. 20,000,000 per month after the exhaustion of the present credit?

3. Are the French Institutions satisfied to allow the financial arrangements with the communes to be settled by the Comité du Nord

and that we should not, in the future, press for personal guarantees of the district committee members?

4. Will the French Institutions be satisfied with the method of accounting which I propose as between ourselves and the French Institutions?

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 288

Letter, CHADBOURN TO HOOVER, *regarding rumors that C.R.B. imports were going to Germans and concerning the feeding of French civilians forced to work for the occupying forces*

LONDON, 15 July 1915

H. C. Hoover, Esq.
Chairman, Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR HOOVER:

With regard to Mr. Chevrillon's letters, the last of which is dated the 13th of July, in which he inquires about the feeding of German civilians, I beg to say that I have had the direct responsibility and the most intimate contact with the whole situation in Northern France ever since the beginning, and that there never has been, so far as I know, a single German civilian or soldier who has had an ounce of foodstuff which we have imported. This proposition is a total and complete illusion on the part of somebody because there is one tribute that we can pay to the German Army and that is that they have scrupulously helped us in carrying out this part of the guarantees and no one has been so insistent that there should be no ground for complaints on this particular account as has been the German General Staff.

With regard to the other point of feeding French civilians who are at work for the German Army, we have not considered it our business to prevent these people from having food, even when they were working under duress. We have consistently taken the single attitude that every Frenchman in Northern France is to receive food; that no one else is to receive this food; that it is an obligation on us to see to it that the Germans do not prevent the French from receiving food or use the threat of suppressing our supplies as a lever to compulsory work by the French. In other words, we take the attitude that the food should flow freely to the people in Northern France; that no interruption should take place, no matter what the condition of their employment; that our guardianship consists thus of two phases: first, that no one else receive the food except the French; and, secondly, that no one interrupts the flow of food to the French. You can take it absolutely that this has been carried out to the last letter and I would add that the staff and myself who have had this matter in charge were not prepared to give volunteer effort

of this kind to any other sort of control. All of us have worked absolutely for nothing; we have mostly paid our own expenses; and it is only upon the ideal set out above that we were warranted in taking the hardships and the incidental humiliation which we have supported on behalf of the French people.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. H. CHADBOURN

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 289

Letter, HOOVER TO VAN DE VYVERE, *setting forth a positive program of finance, distribution, and accounting for the approval of the French Government*

LONDON, 27 August 1915

A. Van de Vyvere, Esq.
Belgian Minister of Finance, London

DEAR MR. VAN DE VYVERE:

With regard to the work in Northern France, it seems to us that, in the interests of both the Belgian Government and certainly of ourselves, we should have a distinct and positive program agreed by the French Government so that we may know where we stand as to ultimate accounting, and as to incidental administration. We should be very glad, therefore, if you could see your way to submit the following to the French Government and inform us if it would be in accordance with their desires:

1. The Institutions in France will furnish to the American Commission for Relief in Belgium, as agents in London, about 22,000,000 francs, or such less amount monthly as the American Commission may call for, the first instalment being payable during the month of September.

2. These moneys are to be used for the purchase and transport of foodstuffs to the civil population in the occupied territory of Northern France.

3. The American Commission is to deliver these foodstuffs to the Comité Français, either directly or through the Comité National Belge (as may be decided by the American Commission and the Comité National Belge). The foodstuffs are to be valued at prices to be determined by the American Commission and shall be fixed so as to reserve a small margin to the American Commission, this margin to form a reserve for unexpected losses, but any residue to be accounted for by the American Commission and the Comité National Belge to the Institutions upon the completion of the work.

4. The Comité Français is to deliver these foodstuffs to the District Committees. The District Committees will sell the foodstuffs to the communes or cities. The prices which the communes or cities are to pay shall be:

a) The valuation fixed by the American Commission or the Comité National Belge, plus

b) The actual expenses of the Comité Français and the District Committee.

These amounts are to be payable, as to (*b*) in cash, and as to (*a*) in an obligation of the communes or cities, due three months after peace. The Comité Français is to hand these "obligations" to the Comité National Belge, or the American Commission and by the latter they are to be handed to the Institution. They may be deposited with the Société Générale de Belgique for safe keeping until peace.

5. The communes or cities are to sell or distribute the foodstuffs to the population at such prices as will cover their expenditure only.

6. Pending the production of the obligations, the members of the District Committees are to undertake jointly and separately to pay for the foodstuffs shipped to them, but these undertakings are to be liquidated upon the production of the obligations as above. These undertakings are to be payable to and in such form as may be determined by the Société Générale de Belgique.

7. It is distinctly understood that the American Commission, the Comité National Belge, and the Comité Français are entirely humanitarian institutions working without profit, that they take no personal liability upon themselves; that should peace come while work is still in progress, the Institutions will assume all the assets and liabilities of the American Commission they may have in hand for French account without any claim upon them whatever.

8. The American Commission and the Comité National Belge will produce from time to time statements audited by Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company, showing their expenditure for French account and the "obligations" they have in hand.

9. It is recognized that the American Commission, in addition to the functions above set out, have entered into various undertakings with the various belligerent governments, especially with the English, Belgian, and German Governments and have given various guarantees to these Governments covering the transportation and distribution of these foodstuffs. Therefore the City and District Committees must absolutely conform to the directions of the American Commission and of the Comité National Belge in all matters of food transportation, preparation, distribution, and prices. The Comité Français shall also accept the direction of the Comité National Belge or the American Commission in all matters of accounting.

10. The American Commission, the Comité National Belge, and the Comité Français agree to centralize all correspondence, statistics, documents, reports, etc., into the hands of their joint representative Monsieur Louis Chevrillon, at the office chosen in Paris, 23 rue de la Paix.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. Hoover
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 290

Memorandum setting out the detailed handling of Northern France work between the C.R.B., the Comité National (Belgium), and the new French committee, the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France

BRUSSELS, 16 September 1915

It is absolutely indispensable that all the transactions which have been and will be made, and whose object is the provisioning of the Northern France districts, should be accounted for in every particular.

On this subject, at a meeting held the 16th September, Mr. Hoover decided that the following regulations should be adopted:

1. COMITÉ NATIONAL

I. Starting from the 1st September the C.N. will invoice to the C.F. all the goods at the price charged by the C.R.B. to the C.N.

II. As the prices charged by the C.N. to its provincial committees are superior to those that will be charged to the C.F. by the C.N. it would be advisable to cut off entirely, or at least to reduce as much as possible, the purchases made by the C.F. from the Belgian provincial committees (unless the goods bought are not supplied by the C.R.B. to the C.F.).

III. For the period from the beginning up to the 1st September, the C.N. in agreement with the C.R.B. auditor will make a statement of all the goods supplied to the C.F. and proceeding from C.R.B.'s direct shipments.

The C.N. will return to the C.F. the difference between what has been debited by the C.R.B. (Rotterdam) to the C. N. and by the C.N. to the C.F.

IV. The C.N. will request the C.F. for the return of all the real expenses that have been borne by the C.N. for the goods delivered to the C.F. up to the 1st September (insurance, general expenses, etc.).

From the 1st September the C.N. will remit monthly to the C.F. a bill for the same expenses.

2. MILLING AND VARIOUS COSTS ON THE GOODS OF THE C.R.B. PASSING THROUGH BELGIUM

Milling

To obtain the same costs it is advisable to perform all the work in one or two mills placed under the C.F. control.

As very favorable contracts have been obtained in Louvain (Frs. 1.00 for the milling of 100 kgs. of wheat, all the by-products being the property of the C.F.), and in order to prevent justifying subsequently the special accounts with the Belgian provincial committees, it is advisable to consider suppressing milling as well in Hainaut as in Namur.

The freight charges will be higher when milling at Louvain, but the reduction of the milling costs will compensate this.

Purchases of Sundries in Belgium

The buying is effected under the management of Mr. Le Blan, delegate of Mr. Guérin, in Brussels.

Every month a statement of these purchases will be signed for approval by Mr. Le Blan. A monthly report concerning these purchases will be supplied by the office that attends to same.

Margin in the Accounts of the C.F.

Mr. Hoover agrees that a reserve of Frs. 200,000 should be kept for wasted bags and a reserve of Frs. 1,000,000 for eventual losses not covered by the insurance.

For the present, so as to reduce the margin, all goods from the C.R.B. will be billed to the district committees by the C.F. at the C.R.B. prices.

Accounts C.F.

The following accounting system will be established in order to emphasize the following transactions:

a) Transactions relating to the goods supplied to the district committees on the same conditions as when shipped from Rotterdam with a subdivision regarding the direct shipments and those in transit by the storehouses.

b) Transactions relating to the C.R.B. goods which have to go through any transformation in Belgium, such as the wheat that has to be milled, the green coffee that might be roasted, etc.

c) Transactions relating to goods purchased in Belgium from particular purveyors. (This is the statement that is to be signed by Mr. Le Blan.)

d) Purchases from the C.N. of goods proceeding from the C.R.B. (such as salt and other articles coming from the general stock).

e) Purchases (from the C.N.) of goods which have been bought in Belgium by the C.N. (for instance, coffee coming from the "Valorisation").

f) Purchases (from the C.F.) of goods proceeding from the transformation of C.R.B. imports (such as cerealine, cornmeal, soap, etc.).

It is understood that, for purchases mentioned under paragraphs (*d*), (*e*), and (*f*), the prices will be those paid to the C.N. by the Belgian provincial committees for the similar goods.

g) Purchases from the provincial committees, of goods imported by the C.R.B. The price paid to the provincial committees, will be the same as that paid by the latter to the C.N.

h) Purchases from the provincial committees, of goods not imported by the C.R.B.

i) Freight charges or money advances made by the district committees in order to settle the costs upon arrival of the lighters or wagons.

j) Handling expenses relating to the goods in transit through Belgium.

k) General expenses which are to be subdivided into office expenses, furniture, etc., salaries to the employees of the central office and those who attend to the storehouse control.

l) All returns made to the district committees.

m) Sacks account.

n) Special account for clothing and shoes.

o) Costs of insurance.

p) Monthly payments to the C.N.

q) Special accounts for Maubeuge, Givet, which do not receive food but money.

Naturally, all accounts to be kept by districts. All these accounts to be approved by the C.R.B. auditor.

[*Translation*]

The series of highly important negotiations concerning the forthcoming harvest, upon the outcome of which depended the life of the relief work in both Belgium and France, came to a successful conclusion in the summer of 1915.[28] In August, General Headquarters decreed that a daily per capita ration of 100 grams of indigenous flour would be put at the disposal of the population in occupied French territory. With this agreement in hand Hoover had in September secured an increase in the subsidy for the program in Northern France to Frs. 20,000,000 per month; but other difficulties were arising. There were the scarcity and high cost of food and the lack of shipping,[29] but more important than these were the new restrictions on the Commission's importations applied by the British Foreign Office.[30] These restrictions were inspired largely by the hostility, to the entire relief, of the military authorities both British and French, and Hoover decided the time had come for a thorough understanding with the two governments. The following documents describe his negotiations in London to secure formal approval by the British and French authorities of the Commission's organization in the North of France relief and his efforts in Paris and at the French G.H.Q. to get more active support of influential officials.

[28] See chapter viii.

[29] Chapter v, Document 218.

[30] See chapter iii, particularly Documents 70 and 82, for negotiations with the British Foreign Office regarding importations.

DOCUMENT NO. 291

Memorandum, BY HOOVER, *reviewing the work in Northern France to the 30th October 1915, presenting a program for the following months, describing the organization of relief, and requesting the official approval of the French and British Governments*

LONDON, December 1915

MEMORANDUM

The Commission for Relief in Belgium is formed of a group of volunteer gentlemen, chiefly American, acting under the patronage of the American and Spanish Ambassadors and Ministers in various European centers. The Commission operates entirely without profit and purely from the humanitarian desire to relax the incidence of war upon occupied civil populations. It was originally organized to assist the 7,000,000 people in Belgium, but has extended its operations to cover the 2,200,000 civil population in the occupied area of Northern France.

Since its inception it has imported to these populations foodstuffs to the value of 375,000,000 francs.

The work of the Commission in the ravitaillement of the occupied area of Northern France has now been in progress at an increasing volume, since April last. Up to the 30th day of October the sum of Frs. 69,307,449.26 has been expended upon this account, and it may be stated with emphasis that the population is today in good health and physical condition, and the horrors of famine or evacuation have been successfully prevented. The Commission has received to the 31st of October, total of Frs. 95,000,000, the balance of which money is absorbed in the stock of goods in transit, which from overseas ports requires practically two months foresight. The Commission has negotiated a number of agreements with the German authorities as to the organization and protection of the work, and as to the guarantees that the food supplies distributed shall reach the civil population alone. Furthermore, the Commission has set up a number of undertakings with the Germans with respect to the participation of the Commission in the control of the distribution of domestic supplies, as the result of last harvest, to the civil population.

In order to control the distribution in the occupied area the Commission has divided that area into six districts, presided over in each case by an American representative of the Commission under the immediate control of a chief representative of the Commission stationed at Charleville, and under the general control of the Commission's office in Brussels. In each district the Commission has assembled a French committee, comprising gentlemen of the highest standing in the district, who execute the general control of the distribution under the guidance of the American representative; and the Commission has further set up in each commune a committee acting under the direction of the district committees and again subject to the direction of the American representative. In order to facilitate accounting, the Commission has set up a general committee, called the Comité d'Ali-

mentation du Nord de la France, which maintains an office with the Commission in Brussels, under the general presidency of Mr. Louis Guérin, but under the actual administrative representation of Mr. Le Blan.

The Commission ships foodstuffs required direct to the district committees from Rotterdam or other points and debits to these committees the entire cost of such foodstuffs at prices calculated by the Commission to cover its entire expenditure. The total of these debits against the district committees is aggregated in the Brussels office under the general title of Comité Français, and with the assistance of the accountants of the Comité National Belge. The accounts of the Commission abroad are conducted by Messrs. Deloitte, Plender, Griffiths and Company whose representatives in Brussels audit the accounts of the Comité Français.

The district committees in turn deliver the foodstuffs to the communal committees and debit them at the original prices of the Commission, plus a small margin to cover their out-of-pocket and incidental expenditure. The communal authorities give an obligation for the foodstuffs delivered to them, this obligation being repayable after the war, and these obligations are accepted by the Commission in Brussels as a liquidation of the obligations of the district committees. The district committees in turn giving a financial guarantee that they will produce these communal obligations to the full extent of the foodstuffs consigned to them.

The communal committees dispose of the foodstuffs to the population at a fixed ration under regulations imposed by the Commission in such a manner as to care for the destitute as well as for those who can afford to pay and at prices determined by the Commission.

Understandings Desired

As the Commission feels that it is now necessary to reconsider the whole organization and future of the work of the Commission with a view to the continued work, it desires an understanding with the Allied Governments on the following essential points:

1. Future importations and the finance thereof.
2. Organization in Northern France.

Future Supplies

The whole situation as imposed by the approaching winter and the gradual exhaustion of summer supplies has been the subject of a very intimate study by the American staff in consultation with the French district committees and the following program of minimum food supplies[31] has been drawn up:

. . . . . .

It has been agreed after consultation with the district committees as to available domestic supplies, that this represents the minimum supplies which, with such other local supplies as may be obtained,

[31] See chapter iii, Document 71, for program for Northern France omitted here.

will for the next four or five months, in any event, maintain the population in health. It will be noted that the supply is entirely below that generally advanced by dietary specialists, as required to support life; but the Commission feels that it will be sufficient and that the dominant factor—even were more monetary supplies available—is the volume of shipping which can be obtained from over the seas. While it may be stated at once that the population in this area would be grateful for a larger supply, yet the Commission feels that this is all that it can hope to deliver with any material certainty, in view of the present position of the shipping world, and that if it can carry out the above ideal it will at least have protected the general health of the people. The ration above is founded upon practical requirements rather than theoretical data, although such have been kept in view as far as possible, and in view of the difficulties of delivering, even the above may turn out to be rather an ideal than a commitment of realization. It has hitherto been impossible to deliver the whole program owing to unexpected shortages in shipment, shipping, loss of ships, and various uncontrollable causes. The Commission wishes permission to import the above quantities of materials into Rotterdam and desires to have an assurance that subvention of Frs. 24,000,000 per month will be forthcoming to cover the expenditure.

Organization of Northern France

In order to facilitate the work of the Commission and to afford a basis on which the Commission may expect to ultimately liquidate its trust as to expenditure and accounts, the Commission desires a confirmation by the French Government, or by the English Government acting on its behalf, on the following points:

a) That the method of accounting and disposal of supplies as set out above is upon a basis satisfactory to the Allied Governments, and that inasmuch as the Commission is an entirely humanitarian institution working without profit it has no responsibility on its members, and should peace come while the work is still in progress the French Institutions will take over all foodstuffs in transit and at cost and assume the liabilities outstanding thereon. Furthermore that while the Commission has set up every safeguard it can devise as to accounting beyond delivery of the communal obligation, and auditing, the individual members shall not be held responsible for any failure in this particular, as it is to be understood that the members are doing their level best under the most trying and difficult circumstances.

b) The Commission desires that it should be set out clearly that all French committees and their membership are set up entirely subject to the direction of the Commission and its representatives and hold their appointment and membership entirely subject to the will of the Commission, and that no independent action of any character by any member of any such committees shall be taken without previous express approval of the Commission, this latter being vitally necessary, as all negotiations with governments involved must be centralized in the Commission or absolute chaos will ensue.

DOCUMENT NO. 292

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *giving the approval of the French and British Governments to the financial and administrative arrangements set out in the preceding memorandum, but withholding approval of the program of imports*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON, 27 January 1916

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

We have received from the French Embassy a memorandum which I enclose herein, and which I understand was drawn up by you and Monsieur Chevrillon, dealing with your organisation for relief in Northern France.

I am directed to inform you that the general financial and other principles set forth in this memorandum are approved as a basis for your work.

We cannot at present extend this approval definitely to the programme of imports which was embodied in this memorandum, but I will communicate with you further on this point.

We shall conclude, unless we hear to the contrary, that your organisation in Northern France will be conducted on the lines set forth in this memorandum in the future without material alteration.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 293

Memorandum, BY HOOVER, *of conferences with officials of the French Government and General Staff in Paris and Chantilly, 10th–15th February 1916, on relief in Northern France.* (Extracts only.)

LONDON, [18 February 1916]

Thursday, 10th February 1916

Arrived Paris three o'clock in the morning via Dieppe; went with Chevrillon at ten to call on Lieutenant Serruys at the War Ministry, he being the delegate of the General Staff to keep track of our operations. Discussed with him the general attitude of Staff toward our work; gathered that it was generally favorable but disturbed by continuous German requisitions; went over details of several of these reports also recent F.O. despatches re cattle, etc. Also discussed shipping question. He informed me that Germans were buying neutral ships in Spain, apparently to embarrass the Allies. He suggested we should buy neutral ships. (Appeared to me from the despatch he showed us that Spanish were buying from Germans.) He suggested I should see the General Staff at Chantilly, and said he would take the matter up.

At eleven o'clock went with Chevrillon to see Monsieur Gout, Foreign Office, (he being the link with the Marine Department). He

was not initially very enthusiastic over the feeding of Northern France and Belgium, but after a long interview seemed satisfied. Chevrillon and I presented strongly the various phases, humanitarian, military, political, and our embarrassment over shipping. Discussed details of shipping position[32] and our own present perilous position and urged him that the French Government should take a strong line and insist that our requirements be put on a par with military or food operations of the Allies and that we be assigned our tonnage in the same way. Discussed German ships and he agreed initial refusal was an error and urged we take it up again. I pointed out the great improbability that the Germans would now accede, as they were obviously convinced that the Allies were embarrassed for tonnage and for them to give us 200,000 tons of shipping would simply relieve the Allies of that amount. He urged we take it up again, but I replied generally that while we would try, we had now but little hope and that we must have immediate tonnage or disaster must result. He agreed we should see General Staff and Prime Minister.

At four o'clock went with Chevrillon to see Monsieur Chappsal, Under-Secretary in charge of the ravitaillement of civil population of France (Department of Commerce). He strongly supported our ravitaillement but was against German shipping, claiming that the German submarines would capture one of their own ships and convert it into a privateer. Agreed we should be put in first rank of necessities and said he would urge it on his Minister.

At 5:30 I saw Monsieur Nail, Under-Secretary (Marine). Chevrillon outlined our history, purpose, and present position, humane, military, and political importance of our work in Northern France. Was very sympathetic, said we had his unqualified support; said must see the Prime Minister and he would arrange it. Agreed we should be put in forefront in apportioning tonnage, but considered ultimate solution was for us to buy neutral ships and French Government would take them over on peace. Various measures of this order were discussed, but we brought the issue back constantly to the footing of immediate action, which could only be done by strong measures at governmental hands—in forcing tonnage to accept our mission.

Friday, 11th February 1916

10:30.—Went with Chevrillon to see Monsieur Metain, Minister of Labor; briefly recited our difficulties, principally shipping. He said

[32] Though Hoover's general object in these Paris negotiations was to get active support of the French, the problem which assumed paramount importance at this time was that of shipping. In the preceding October the French had turned down Hoover's proposals for the use of German interned ships (see Document 210, chapter v), after Hoover had secured the approval of the British Government and of the Germans to the scheme. It is interesting to note that the French now informally suggested that Hoover revive the negotiations. In the meantime, as Hoover feared, the German attitude had changed and they refused to release their interned tonnage for relief service. (Chapter v, Documents 212, 213.)

he needed no conviction as to the prime importance of our work. We could count on his earnest support.

11:30.—Called on M. Lucien Poincaré, brother to the President—social call. He said I must see the President and he would arrange it.

5:30.—Called with Chevrillon on Monsieur Sembat, Minister of Public Works, he, jointly with M. Thierry, being in control all questions of mercantile shipping and M. Sembat representing the French Government in joint councils with English on shipping questions. We went over the position fully and strongly urged our necessities. He asked us to prepare him a memorandum and said he would strongly urge the matter at Saturday's Cabinet meeting.

Saturday, 12th February 1916

5:00.—Called on Monsieur Berthelot, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who had M. Kammerer with him (the latter being in the Finance Department—Foreign Office link). Berthelot was our principal destroyer on German shipping contract, together with Klobukowski, French Minister to the Belgian Government at Havre. He remained only a few minutes—leaving us with Kammerer, with whom we went over the old ground, we insisting vigorously that the job was primarily the concern of the French people and if they would only come out of the shell of "we do not object" and take on a formula of "we insist," things would go better. He agreed we must be saved somehow.

Sunday, 13th February 1916

4:00.—Motored with Chevrillon to Chantilly, and discussed matters with General Staff. Colonel Buat and Captain Marsal received us and we went over a multitude of grounds, military, political, financial, shipping, etc. They agreed that the principle of a minimum food supply just sufficient to supplement natural supplies must be maintained, but they were strong on the minimum. We express satisfaction with this agreement that the Commission must go on. We then spent an hour on details of German requisition and transgressions against native food, which they had accumulated against us. Went over a mass of detail about distribution methods, and, I felt, left them somewhat reassured.

Finally I stated that it seemed absurd to us, an American body, that we should be at constant trench warfare with the French and English General Staffs over this work. That we were in constant battle over imports absolutely vital to preserve the life of French people and we were prepared to surrender and let them do the job if they could do it better. That we were always in an equal quarrel with the German Staff over native food—and we were getting very, very tired and worn. This caused some amusement—and I am convinced a better attitude altogether. I am satisfied we will have better co-operation.

Monday, 14th February 1916

At 5:30.—Went with Chevrillon to the Elysée, where we were received by President Poincaré. He stated that he had asked me to

call, as he wished to express the appreciation and admiration of the French people for the work we were doing on behalf of their northern countrymen. He stated that he had kept himself in touch with the work and said that he was filled with admiration for the efficiency and the ability with which it had been administered; that it had now become an enormous enterprise and one of great complexity. He had fully realized the pressure we were under from the people in the North to increase the supplies, and the still greater pressure we were under from the different Allies to reduce them; also the difficulties we were constantly getting into with the Germans in our endeavor to protect the native food supply. He said no one expected us to reach the ideal in any of these directions. I told him that our whole desire was to keep the population alive and in health until the war was over; that this meant a good deal of privation, especially to those classes who had always had more than sufficient, and that it had necessarily meant a good deal of complaint from them. I also stated that we were in jeopardy of total failure owing to the lack of shipping and I felt that a more direct support of the Commission from the French Government would be of great assistance. He stated that the Council had already discussed the matter fully and made direct representations to the British Government, hoping to thus afford a solution of our shipping and other difficulties.

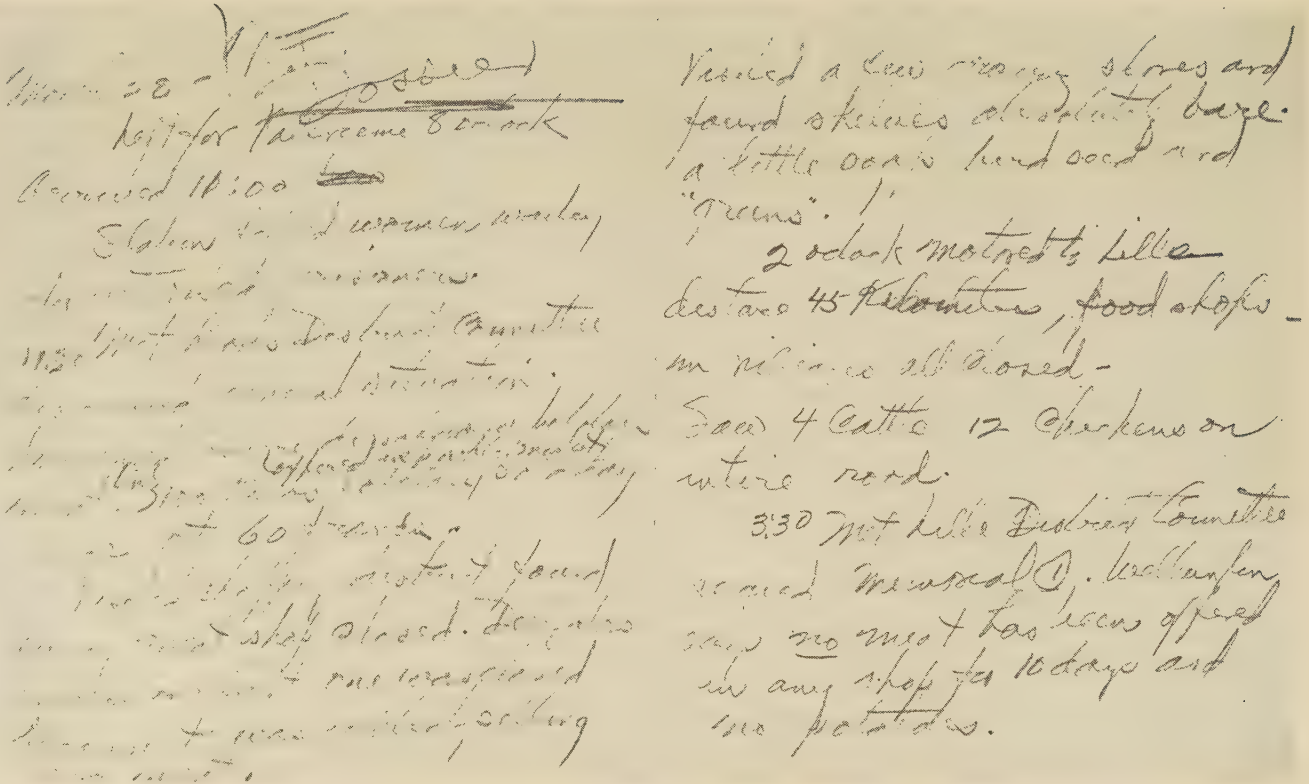
Mr. Chevrillon told him that the question of maintaining food supplies to the people in the North was one of vast military, political importance, but that this phase of the question was obviously not for discussion with a neutral; that my attitude was wholly that of the humanitarian aspect, but from the French point of view these weighty factors must not be overlooked. The President said that he fully realized the importance of these phases of the matter, that they had been thoroughly ventilated from time to time in the councils of the French Government; that, of course, the humanitarian aspect must in the end dominate all questions; that the French people were fighting for their existence and the existence of the French nation embraced the two and a half millions of Frenchmen in the North.

He rose and again stated impressively that he wished to convey to me the thanks of the French Republic.

Returned to London, Tuesday, 15th February 1916.

In March 1916 Hoover made a personal investigation of conditions in the North of France and on his return asked the Foreign Office to permit increased importations to these regions, to which the Foreign Office agreed in April 1916.[33] In this month, the Commission became involved in the controversy raised by the attempts of the Germans to force the French people to work for them. The particular incident

[33] Chapter iii, Documents 81 and 82.



Hoover's Memoranda on Inspection Trip through Northern France in March 1916

was the deportation of men and women from the district of Lille, against which the Commission protested vigorously at the German G.H.Q. This controversy, which is treated in detail in chapter x, added another complication to the difficult negotiations with the belligerents concerning native crops, on which Hoover was then engaged. In spite of its strong stand against the deportations policy[34] the standing of the Commission with the Germans was not weakened, and with the relaxation of tension in the summer of 1916 satisfactory arrangements for the 1916 harvest were made with the army command.[35]

4. *Supplementary Program for the Cities. March 1916–April 1917*

Within the limits set by the arbitrary restrictions of the Foreign Office and the obtainable shipping the Commission was delivering food to the entire population of the French provinces in sufficient quantities to prevent acute hunger or deterioration to health. In the rural districts where garden produce could be raised and where concealment from the requisitioning authorities was possible, the food situation was much easier than in the crowded industrial districts where the inhabitants were absolutely dependent on the supplies brought in by the C.R.B. There was unquestionably some suffering in the Lille district, and there were complaints to Paris on the inadequacy of the ration, the loudest complaints usually coming from those who in times of peace had enjoyed an abundance of the things now so carefully measured out to them. Political pressure in Paris induced the French Cabinet, in contrast to its original position respecting relief, to sanction and subsidize private French committees which proposed to supplement the C.R.B. imports by supplies from Holland and Switzerland. Hoover had, of course, no objection to the importation of supplementary supplies for the industrial districts, but, since the Commission was held responsible for the protection of the French people by seeing that the Germans observed their

[34] See chapter x; Kellogg: *Fighting Starvation in Belgium*, 1918, pp. 61–64.
[35] See chapter viii.

agreements and by importing and distributing food from abroad, he did object to having the Commission's position weakened by the establishment of new committees which the Germans could play off against the C.R.B. The British Foreign Office, which clearly saw that new committees would make it more difficult to hold the Germans strictly to their guarantees, strongly supported Hoover in his representations to the French Cabinet. The arrangement finally adopted left undisturbed the French committee[36] established in Holland and subsidized by the French Treasury to the extent of Frs. 30,000,000, but provided that no new distributing organizations be set up in the occupied territories. The supplies purchased in Holland by the French committee were turned over to the Commission, which transported them to Northern France and distributed them as a part of its supplementary program for the cities. For the years 1917–1918 the purchases of the French committee imported by the Commission amounted to about 44,000 tons, mainly vegetables and fruit. During the same period the Commission's other imports of flour, fats, and other staples to Northern France were over 400,000 tons.

DOCUMENT NO. 294

Letter, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *explaining the cost of the French program and stating the necessity for increased subsidies*

LONDON, 24 August 1916

Louis Chevrillon, Esq.
Paris

DEAR MR. CHEVRILLON:

The steady increase in necessities for the North of France together with the extraordinary rise in the prices of foodstuffs during the last month, renders it necessary to reconsider the entire financial problem involved in the relief of the people in Northern France.

The following table shows the amount of foodstuffs delivered into Northern France during the three months ending 25th July, together with the cost thereof:

[36] Comité Hollandais pour Ravitaillement du Nord de la France, sometimes referred to as the Comité Delesalle. (M. Delesalle was the mayor of Lille.)

QUARTER ENDING 25TH JULY

Commodity	Quarterly shipments permitted by Allied Governments *(tons)*	Actual deliveries *(tons)*	Cost *(£)*
Wheat	70,500	75,142	1,111,146
Bacon	3,200	2,697	206,386
Lard	6,400	5,609	394,032
Maize	6,600	6,200	62,000
Peas and beans	4,950	1,980	61,088
Rice	13,200	15,656	269,283
Coffee	3,300	3,940	216,211
Fish (salted)	1,500	nil	nil
Condensed milk	4,950	3,433	167,531
Soap	3,000	2,383	72,871
Sugar	4,000	5,061	156,379
Cocoa	750	nil	nil
Total			2,716,927
Total per month			905,642
Or (@ 28.50)			Frs. 25,810,797

The following table shows the probable cost during the next quarter of the program of shipments permitted by the Allied Governments:

COST OF AUTHORIZED PROGRAM AT PRESENT PRICES

Commodity	Tonnage authorized per quarter	Cost per ton delivered Northern France *(£)*	Total *(£)*
Wheat	70,500	20	1,410,000
Bacon	3,200	77	246,400
Lard	6,400	72	460,800
Maize	6,600	10	66,000
Peas and beans	4,950	30	148,500
Rice	13,200	20	263,600
Cocoa	750	98	73,500
Fish (preserved)	1,500	40	60,000
Condensed milk	4,950	50	247,500
Soap	3,000	31	93,000
Sugar	4,000	33	132,000
Coffee	3,300	60	198,000
Purchases in Belgium, say	.....	..	100,000
Total			3,499,300
Total per month			1,166,433
Or (@ 28.50)			Frs. 33,243,340.50

We are at present negotiating with the German Government with a view to an increased proportion of wheat from the native produce, and this may result in diminishing our requirements for imported wheat to about 15,000 tons a month or a saving of, say, £300,000; but the condition of the population is such that we must undertake at once the importation of meat and other supplies. Two thousand tons of meat per month would cost about £160,000 per month, and other supplies needed will restore the demands to the full figure of requirements, or at least Frs. 33,000,000 per month. As you are aware, our present monthly subsidy is Frs. 20,000,000, which at present sterling exchange yields approximately £710,000 per month. You will notice that we overspent during the quarter ending 25th July, but we were able to do this as we had some money in hand as a result of our being unable to deliver the full program during the winter, owing to the shortage of shipping. It appears to me therefore that if we are to continue to keep the population going, it will be necessary at once to increase our subsidy.

I am wondering whether you would be good enough to lay this before the French Government for their consideration.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) H. C. HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 295

Memorandum, BY HOOVER, *on conferences in Paris with French and British, 25th–28th August 1916, on finance and program for Northern France and particularly on the supplementary imports for the congested districts around Lille.* (With supplementary memoranda.)

[Paris, 28 August 1916]

MEMORANDUM

I left London for Paris on 24th August, arriving on Friday morning the 25th at Havre, where I lunched with Mr. Berryer, Minister of the Interior of the Belgian Government, and Mr. Vandervelde, Minister of War. I informed them generally as to the shortage of the Belgian subsidies,[37] owing to the rise in prices, and of the demands for more foodstuffs.

On Friday night I went to Paris.

On Saturday morning at 9:30 had a meeting with Lord Eustace Percy and Lord Granville at the British Embassy. Discussed the question of increased food supply in the North of France and the abolition of the various new committees which have arisen through the stimulation of the district committees in the North. At 10:30, with Lord Granville, Lord Eustace Percy, and Mr. Chevrillon, called upon Mr. Margerie, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who had also present Mr. Laroche.

Had a long discussion, during which Mr. Margerie outlined the necessity for more food for the people in the North, their constant

[37] See chapter iv, Documents 148 and 149.

demands made to obtain it, the desire of the French Government that they should have a more liberal supply, and the reasons for the establishment of relief measures from Switzerland and Holland for supplementing the work of the Commission. He stated that the Delesalle Committee had been given a credit of thirty millions of francs for Dutch imports and that if the Commission was unable to supply the situation the Government was anxious that the Delesalle Committee should be allowed to operate through the N.O.T.[38] I stated that the negotiations between the Swiss Government and the German Government for the establishment of Swiss offices in the North and the establishment of arrangements with the Dutch through the N.O.T. by which the Dutch organizations would be extended over the North of France completely undermined the ability of the C.R.B. to protect the people, and that it means simply an era of intrigue and rivalry which we would not participate in, and that if the French Government was desirous of setting up any other nationality to take up the work in the North of France we should be only too delighted and that they should consider their hands entirely free; that we were in no way jealous in the matter, but that we were perfectly satisfied that if such arrangements were made they would be absolutely fatal to the interests of the people and that whoever was set up in charge of the relief must have a complete monopoly in order to deal competently with the German authorities. I stated that there was a tendency to oversee the necessities of Lille and the vicinity, but that, eliminating the hysteria in the matter, the people did require a further supply of foodstuffs, for which permits had not yet been granted to us by the English Government[39] (especially fats and protein); that the curtailed ration on which we were operating was undoubtedly too low, and that the sensible thing to do was to put us in a position both as to permits, finance, and shipping, to competently care for these people. A prolonged discussion took place in which the English representatives insisted strongly upon the maintenance of a controlled monopoly, the elimination of the other schemes. Finally Mr. Margerie drew out three questions for me to reply to in detail, requesting that we should draw up a complete memorandum for discussion at a meeting to take place on the 28th at ten o'clock.

In the afternoon at 3:30 I again attended at Mr. Margerie's office and met Mr. Kammerer together with Mr. Laroche, to discuss the financial aspects of the French relief. I outlined to them the increased cost owing to the rise in the price of food and the cost of the additional shipments, and stated that it would be useless to talk of further food supplies or even of the maintenance of the present supply, unless we were assured of at least 35,000,000 francs per month. They considered this was possible of arrangement, and it was left that I should incorporate this in the memorandum to be prepared for Monday morning. I also presented the outstanding

[38] Nederlandsche Overzee Trustmaatschappij. See footnote, Document 72, chapter iii.

[39] See chapter iii, Document 76.

accounting questions and it was agreed that my views thereon should also be put into the memorandum.

On Sunday at ten o'clock I attended at the British Embassy with Lord Eustace Percy and Mr. Chevrillon. Chevrillon and myself drafted up a memorandum from the Commission embracing the questions put by Mr. Margerie and the proposals of the Commission, and Lord Eustace Percy drew up the views of the British Government.

On Monday at ten o'clock we attended at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there being present Mr. Margerie, Mr. Laroche, Lord Granville, Lord Eustace Percy, Mr. Chevrillon, and myself. We read through the memorandum which had been prepared. After prolonged discussion the French representatives accepted the views expressed in the Commission's memorandum, and it was left that they should consult the Minister of Finance to arrange for an increased subsidy and that the English representatives would put it up to their Government that the French Government was insistent upon the proposals of the Commission being accepted.

They accepted our proposals as to accounting.

I. Memorandum by Hoover and Chevrillon

As a basis of conference, the representatives of the French Government put the following three questions:

1. Is Mr. Hoover disposed, and is he able to increase the rations over and above those at present imported?

2. Is Mr. Hoover disposed, and is he able to increase the list of products with which France is provisioned sufficiently to reach as far as possible the amount of 3,000 calories per capita?

3. Is Mr. Hoover willing to act as our intermediary in the purchase, transportation, and distribution of supplementary products, paid for by committees or by individuals, and to be provided from time to time?

Mr. Hoover declares himself ready to fulfil these wishes provided that the Allied Governments authorize the importation of the necessary quantities, and see that the Commission is furnished with the indispensable and necessary ships and finance.

As regards the third question he thinks it necessary to point out that it would be difficult to purchase or transport commodities for private persons and that even for committees the contingent total must be determined so as to include therein the regular supplementary ration for the children and the city populations—thus insuring that supplementary importations due to the initiative of any one committee should be only most exceptional.

Finally, it is necessary to explain the present situation and to set out the views of the Commission as regards the putting into practice of the demands of the French Government.

[*Translation*]

II. Supplementary Memorandum by Hoover and Chevrillon

A. The Commission for Relief in Belgium, in the course of its negotiations with the German military authorities on the subject of

the local harvests of this year,[40] has insisted that the whole amount of the produce of the soil due to the labor of the civil population should be reserved for the consumption of that population.

The Commission thinks it may foretell that the results of these negotiations now in being, will be as follows:

a) Requisition by the Germans of the whole amount of the new harvest of cereals and of potatoes;

b) Allowance to the C.R.B. of 240 grams of wheat per capita per diem;

c) Allowance of 400 grams of potatoes per capita per diem;

d) Allowance of an amount of barley sufficient for the manufacture of yeast;

e) Exemption from requisition of various fresh vegetables.

B. In order to satisfy the needs of the population, the Commission proposes to furnish foodstuffs, nature and quantity of which are specified in the attached appendix. This new program will furnish the following number of calories:

For the whole population	2,170
Supplement for city populations	294
Total calories for city populations	2,464
Supplement for children and invalids	300

Taking into consideration the smallest ration allowed for the children and the supplementary rations furnished by local resources in the agricultural districts, the outlined program corresponds about to a ration for the adults of 3,000 calories.

C. In case of success in the negotiations at present proceeding with the Germans, there will be a reduction in the importations of wheat of about 15,000 tons a month i.e., a net economy on overseas importations of about 10,000 tons.

If the negotiations for the introduction of Dutch produce succeed, articles such as butter, cheese, and a great part of the meat will come in from Holland, which will represent a further reduction of tonnage of more than 3,000 tons.

D. The new program implies the following increase on present amounts:

Increase per Capita per Diem	Commodities	Grams
For whole population	—preserved fish	9
For urban population	—meat	50
For urban population	—butter	10
For urban population	—cheese	20
For infant population	—cocoa	10

NOTE.—The above quantities represent an increase in tonnage of about 3,530 tons a month.

E. The monthly budget corresponding with the new program will be about Frs. 45,000,000, from which must be deducted the sum of Frs. 12,000,000 in case of the success of the German negotiations mentioned above. The Commission therefore requires a monthly subsidy of about Frs. 35,000,000 in round numbers from 1st Sep-

[40] See chapter viii.

tember 1916. The increase of Frs. 15,000,000 on the present monthly subsidy is attributable in part to the increase of ration, compensated, however, up to a certain point, by the anticipated German concessions, and also to the considerable rise in the prices of foodstuffs in the last two months.

F. As regards the different committees instituted by the people of the invaded territories for the introduction of additional supplies, the Commission wishes to insist most urgently that it is impossible to protect the foodstuffs for the population and the local production unless the entire amount of importations is under its own control. The Commission recommends therefore that these committees or organizations should be placed under the following regulations:

a) Their purchases will be consigned to the Commission at the original place of purchase and the Commission will transport them to their destination.

b) These purchases will be distributed to the whole population and in no case can they be delivered to an individual.

c) In cases where the foodstuffs introduced are other than gifts, their price of purchase at the original place of purchase shall not be greater than that obtainable by the C.R.B.

d) The nature and quantities of foodstuffs thus introduced shall be approved by the Allied Governments.

e) No foreign agent of these committees shall go into Northern France or shall treat either directly or indirectly with the German authorities, and any negotiations on the subject of the ravitaillement shall be conducted with the Germans only through the medium of the Commission.

G. The Commission proposes to introduce certain laws in regard to accounts in the North of France, and to impose certain obligations as regards payments to be made by the communes or the municipalities; these rules and obligations shall have received the approval of the French Government.

In order to establish the good faith of its administration and to relieve it of responsibility the Commission desires that a committee should be officially instituted, comprising certain representatives of the French Government and the delegate of the Commission resident in Paris, in order to co-operate with the Commission and to formulate the methods of accounting to be used and to give a discharge to the Commission in the administration of the funds which it receives.

H. The Commission is ready to offer its services to the French Government for the ravitaillement of that portion of the Belgian population in the occupied areas, which will be liberated by a withdrawal of the German lines. In this case the Commission holds itself ready to send into French ports the foodstuffs in transit on the sea at any given moment. However, in order not to make any interruption in the feeding of those people remaining behind the German lines, the Commission desires to receive the authorization to create a stock of foodstuff at Rotterdam of 100,000 tons.

[*Translation*]

III. Memorandum by Lord Eustace Percy

The representatives of the British Government at the conference desire to make the following general remarks on the foregoing proposals put forward by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

The view of His Majesty's Government is that the relief of the occupied territories must be (*a*) supplementary to native foodstuffs and (*b*) confined to the minimum quantity necessary, in conjunction with such native foodstuffs, to maintain life and health and to conserve the future efficiency of the population.

Strictly, therefore, as Northern France has admittedly produced, in the present harvest, enough cereals and potatoes to feed the whole population, no wheat or potatoes should be imported into the territory.

It may be taken for granted that, in view of the guarantees almost certainly procured from the Germans in regard to potatoes, it will be unnecessary to import potatoes.

As to wheat, the Commission will still have to import about 8,000 tons a month to supplement native supplies guaranteed by the Germans. Strictly this should not be allowed, but the Germans should be told that, whatever happens, the population will have to satisfy its bread requirements from native wheat entirely.

As regards the amount of foodstuffs absolutely necessary to maintain life and health and to conserve the efficiency of the population in the future His Majesty's Government are advised that a per capita ration of 3,000 calories is too high. It is higher than that actually enjoyed by the German population itself, even probably by the industrial section of that population engaged in heavy manual labour. It must therefore be too high for a population like that in the occupied territories, where industries are not running and where the whole male population of military age has been taken from the country. It is true that the Relief Commission has proved its ability to protect the foodstuffs which it imports, but nevertheless an increase of imports beyond what is absolutely necessary is highly undesirable, for the following reasons:

a) The protection of the imported foodstuffs is not a thing permanently assured, but is on the contrary only maintained by constant vigilance and the constant repression of frauds and abuses. As soon as any part of the population has more food than it absolutely and immediately needs, sales begin to take place to German soldiers, etc., and other leakages occur which the Commission could only imperfectly check.

b) The possibility of seizures in violation of the German guarantees can never be excluded, and this danger will reach very serious proportions as soon as any part of the population in invaded territories can be alleged by the Germans to be living better than the Germans themselves. The Germans know well that the Allied Governments would with difficulty reconcile themselves to put an end to the work of the Relief Commission even if the enemy were suddenly to seize one or two thousand tons of some imported article of which the Germans stand particularly in need. Excuses would be

made, some local German commander would be made responsible, and the enemy would escape with impunity. It is of the utmost importance that Allied Governments should safeguard themselves from being placed in such a dilemma.

c) Just as there is a danger that if the industrial populations are left without food the enemy will tempt them to work for them by offers of nourishment, so, on the other hand, there is a danger that, if those populations are given a ration sufficient to enable them to undertake heavy labour, the enemy will be led, by agitation excited in Germany itself, to require them to perform such labour.

Other reasons of the same kind might be adduced, but those cited are sufficient to explain why His Majesty's Government, who were the first to countenance relief of this kind and who cannot therefore be suspected of inhumanity or lack of consideration for the population of their Allies, feel obliged to insist on the restriction, so far as possible, of the importations into occupied territories. Consequently they would prefer to maintain the present ration unaltered, and even to put further pressure upon the Germans by cutting off all importations of wheat. The only increases for which they recognise that there is clear justification are those for children.

The question of the figure to be fixed for the ration is, however, one for the French Government to decide. His Majesty's Government are prepared to accept their decision and to co-operate with all their energies to carry it out. They hope, however, that the French Government will give due weight to the above considerations in taking their decision, and they consider that the Commission should be instructed to regard the ration fixed as, apart from exceptional cases, an ample maximum, and to import in practice no more than the amount which it finds by experience to be actually necessary at any given moment.

His Majesty's Government are in full complete agreement with the Commission in regard to the question of independent committees and supplementary importations and they regard this point as vital. Moreover, in view of the considerations advanced above, they believe that it will be essential, in approving any applications made for such supplementary importations, that the Allied Governments should consider whether the addition thus proposed to the ration of any particular district will augment it beyond the amount and calorific value necessary, and, if so, whether the regular importations of the Commission should not undergo some proportionate reduction. This, however, must be a matter for consultation between the Allied Governments in each case.

It may be added in conclusion that a special value is to be attached to constant communication between the Allied Governments and the Commission. The whole subject of relief is one of constant negotiations and arrangement, which, however, can in general be conducted unofficially in Paris and London without necessitating official intervention, which the French Government are understood to be desirous of avoiding.

DOCUMENT NO. 296

Memorandum, BY HOOVER, *on the program of ravitaillement in Northern France*

LONDON, [20 September 1916]

1. Arrangements have been settled with the German authorities providing co-operation between them and the Commission for Relief to increase the food supplies during the coming year. These arrangements include an increase of the supplies through the German authorities to a fixed amount of 200 grams of flour and 400 grams of potatoes per diem per capita of the whole population. The Commission for Relief has arranged for an increase[41] in its resources and despite the heavy rise in the prices of foodstuffs abroad, the quantity of imports will be increased.

2. It has been decided to decrease the ration of imported flour to 100 grams per diem as from early in October, thus giving a total flour ration of 300 grams per diem or a bread ration of 400 grams per diem per capita. This will necessitate the import of about 8,000 tons of wheat per month for bread purposes, and an additional import of 2,500 tons will be provided for purposes set out below, giving a total of about 10,500 tons of wheat imports per month. Although the cost of wheat has risen to about 60 centimes per kilo it is proposed to hold the price at 45 centimes, the C.R.B. standing the loss for the present. The price of 30 centimes for indigenous flour by virtue of the larger proportion will permit the price of bread being maintained at not over 40 centimes per kilo without the loss hitherto suffered by the district committees.

3. The preparation of a supplemental ration of "Phosphatine," "Farine lactée," and "Crème de Riz," for the infants under five years, and of special "biscuits" for the children and infirm is in course of rapid extension. It is proposed from early in October to furnish 50 grams, to be later increased to 100 grams per diem of products for the infants, and to furnish 50 grams per diem of biscuits to the children over five years and the infirm, this also to be increased later if possible. These arrangements will require the use of the following commodities in the Belgian factories:

Maize products	350 tons
Wheat	2,000 tons
Lard	100 tons
Sugar	370 tons
Rice	400 tons
Cocoa	100 tons
Condensed milk	100 tons

4. About 1,500 tons per month of condensed milk will be available primarily for distribution to the children and infirm, giving a total

[41] The subsidy for Northern France had been increased to Frs. 35,000,000 per month, as Hoover had requested. Document 294.

import of about 1,600 tons per month, and providing a ration to these classes of 50 grams per diem.

5. About 350 tons of cocoa will be imported monthly, primarily for children and infirm, of which 100 tons mentioned above will be retained for infant-food manufacture. The 250 tons distributed should permit a ration of 10 grams per diem to the smaller children.

6. Negotiations are in progress, providing for the regular import of meat. One thousand sheep have already been shipped into three districts, and it is hoped to extend the quantities and variety of meat imported and to extend shipments over all districts.

7. A trial shipment of 500 tons of herrings in brine is en route and will be distributed during October. Every effort is being made to secure dried fish, although there is probably but a limited amount obtainable.

8. Negotiations are in progress for the purchase and shipment of regular amounts of cheese, and, if possible, some margarine and butter.

9. The import of 7,370 tons per month of rice, beans, peas, and maize products will be continued, and it is proposed as from 1st October to increase the proportion of beans in the above total up to 2,000 tons per month. It is hoped to secure more peas at a later date. Out of these products 400 tons of rice and 350 tons of maize products per month are reserved for child food as above. It is therefore possible to maintain a ration of these subsidiary cereals of 100 grams per diem.

10. The import of bacon and lard will continue at 3,200 tons per month, of which 100 tons is reserved as above, thus permitting a ration of between 45 and 50 grams per diem.

11. The import of 1,100 tons per month of coffee will continue, and in addition 500 tons of wheat will be used to manufacture torrealine, thus permitting a ration of 17 grams of coffee and 8 grams of torrealine.

12. Sugar will be imported at the rate of 1,320 tons per month, of which about 370 tons are reserved for manufacture of child food as above, thus permitting a ration of 15 grams per day.

13. Soap will continue at the rate of 1,000 tons per month.

14. The following table summarizes the ration of the commodities which should be effective from about 1st October:

	Quantity in Grams
Through German authorities	
Flour	200
Potatoes	400
Through C.R.B. imports	
Flour	100
Maize products, Beans and peas, Rice	100
Bacon and lard	45– 50

	Quantity in Grams
Sugar	15
Coffee	17
Soap	15
Meat, Cheese, Preserved fish, Butter	To be settled as imports can be arranged

Supplementary ration for children and infirm

Phosphatine	50 (later 100 grams) for infants
Special biscuits	50 (later 100 grams) for children and infirm
Farine lactée	As sent
Crème de Riz	As sent
Cocoa	10 grams for younger children
Condensed milk	50 grams for infants, children, and infirm

. . . . . .

DOCUMENT NO. 297

Letter, HOOVER[42] TO THE COMITÉ FRANÇAIS, *on internal accounting, and directing that the debt acknowledgments of the communes for relief provisions be transferred direct to the Commission*

BRUSSELS, 15 November 1916

Comite d'Alimentation du Nord de la France

GENTLEMEN:

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

By the financial arrangements which have so far been established, the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France receives from the district committees acknowledgments of debt only, besides the surety bonds given at the beginning of the operations.

Although some of the communes pay all or part for their supplies either in cash or in town bonds, these securities are in no way transferred to the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, since they may not go outside the occupied territory of the North of France, and the Comité Français remains thus uncovered toward the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium for the total amount of the supplies. This debt is increasing to such proportions that it becomes necessary to examine the means of reducing same.

The financial situations of the districts show in their assets considerable book debts by towns and communes on account of advances

[42] Having been successful in securing program and finance increases for Belgium and France for the coming winter (see chapter iii, Document 93) Hoover made a personal investigation throughout the occupied territory in November 1916.

made. By transferring these debts to the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, which in turn would re-transfer them to the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the district committees would free themselves of part of their debt.

The C.R.B. has indeed declared the readiness to accept in payment, just as the cash payments, the debt acknowledgments signed directly by the communes.

Enclosed I hand you a form of engagement which the communes that have received or are receiving cash advances or "bons de ville" from the local committees, should be asked to enter into. I would ask you to instruct the districts to obtain from the communes in question the required signatures of sureties. As soon as you have received these you will credit the account of the district committees for an amount corresponding to the one of the security of the communes. These debt acknowledgments shall then be transferred to the Comité National which will credit you for same. Finally the Comité National will pass them on to the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which will negotiate them to the best of the interests concerned.

I trust that the district committees will see to it that the guarantees in question are obtained as speedily as possible.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 298

Letter, CHAIRMAN OF LILLE DISTRICT COMMITTEE TO HOOVER, *expressing the gratitude of those assisted by the Commission*

BRUSSELS, 18 November 1916

Mr. Herbert Hoover,
Chairman of the Commission, Brussels

MR. CHAIRMAN:

It had been my intention to take the opportunity of your presence at Brussels, to convey to you, in the name of the Lille District Committee, our feelings of deep gratitude.

The population "ravitaillés" by the Commission for Relief in Belgium are unanimous in recognizing that thanks to you they have been able to bear privations of all sorts imposed by circumstances, not only as regards the feeding of the masses, but also for clothing, fuel, and feeding of small children, etc. . . . .

Always ready to give satisfaction to the best of your ability, you have continued to increase the quantity and varieties of the foodstuffs, and you have also facilitated the purchases in Holland of the representatives of the large towns of the district.

What would have become of us without the American Commission? Such is what everybody is saying, which shows in its simplicity how appreciated are the services rendered by your organization over which you preside with so much activity and devotion.

Please accept in the name of the Lille District the expression of our deep gratitude.

(Signed) LABBÉ

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 299

Telegram, BRIAND TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR, LONDON, *quoting reports from the Mayor of Lille and requesting him to approach Hoover and the British Government with regard to increasing the supplementary rations to the towns of Northern France*

PARIS, 11 January 1917

FRENCH AMBASSADOR, LONDON

Representatives of the towns of Northern France communicate to me a letter of the Mayor of Lille dated 20th December giving the distributed quantity of rations per capita per diem at that date:

Flour	350 grams, of which 180 are German rye flour
Rice, beans and maize products	100 grams
Bacon and lard	45 to 50 grams
Sugar	15 grams
Green coffee	17 grams
Soap	15 grams

Besides this, condensed milk, dry biscuits, milk food for children, invalids, and the aged.

Please be good enough to make urgent representations of these quantities to Mr. Hoover, asking him if they correspond with his most recent information. Inform him that according to the Mayor of Lille the German authorities have not delivered the 350 grams of potatoes per capita per diem promised but only 66 grams since the 22d September, and that at the end of November the Kommandaturs declared that it was not possible to furnish potatoes and that they would be replaced by turnips from Belgium. Draw his attention urgently to this last fact, and ask him what steps he intends to take in this regard. The Mayor of Lille points out the situation, which is already known to us, that the supplementary programs for the towns are unfulfilled, owing to the prohibition of the introduction of Dutch foodstuffs, which will probably now be eased, owing to the agreement between Holland and Germans.

As regards supplementary programs, Finance Minister insists that the towns of the North should employ the loan of Fls. 12,000,000

which was granted to them for the purpose of supplementary ravitaillement, the interest on which necessitates large disbursements up to the present without purpose. It is therefore urgent from this point of view also to obtain the consent of the British Government to my proposals concerning the supplementary ravitaillement. Could not a portion of this loan be used to make purchases from the English share of Dutch produce? These purchases could be made for account of the municipalities and remitted to the Hoover Committee for transport and distribution. They would be deducted from the supplementary program and, naturally, the American Committee should keep account of this diminution of expenditure on our account. I beg you to take this suggestion up with Mr. Hoover immediately, before discussing it with the British Government.

BRIAND

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 300

Letter, POLAND TO BROWN, *laying down the policy of the Commission regarding supplementary imports for the towns of Northern France*

LONDON, 22 January 1917

W. L. Brown, Esq.
The Commission for Relief in Belgium, Rotterdam

SUPPLEMENTARY RAVITAILLEMENT FOR NORTHERN FRANCE

DEAR BROWN:

As you will appreciate, the handling of the question of supplementary ravitaillement for the North of France, that is, sending in supplies which may have been purchased by committees other than the C.R.B., is one of great delicacy. We cannot allow anyone to get the false idea that the C.R.B. is unwilling that any additional or supplementary food should go into the country, over and above that which we can import; but, on the other hand, it is rightly necessary, from the standpoint of business and political relations with the Germans, etc., and to the best interests of the French people, that all imports be handled through a single body. The general principle which should govern us is that if it is possible for the C.R.B. to furnish these imports, then no other committee should concern itself in any way with the operation, but if it is possible for some reason for other committees to get in supplies which the C.R.B. cannot get in, then we welcome their efforts in every way. I send attached copies of the conversations concerning this matter between the Commission and the French Government in Paris, 28th August 1916, which I fear have not before been forwarded to you. This will make the matter fairly plain.

Subject to an answer to my Telegram 49 of the 19th and subject to an interview with the Foreign Office on Monday, the following

should govern your action in regard to the De la Salle [Delesalle] Committee:

In the event:

a) Of the C.R.B. being able to supply the full quantities of the approved monthly program for Northern France (including 1,800 tons of meat) either with imported products or with local purchases in Holland (preferably the latter) then you must refuse to ship in additional quantities of the program products.

b) Of your not being able to fulfil the complete program and, for some reason, the De la Salle Committee being able to send in quantities which you are not, making up this deficiency, you are authorized to forward such quantities up to the limit of the program approved.

c) Of the De la Salle Committee offering other commodities than those covered by the approved program, for shipment into France, you should immediately communicate by cable or letter, as circumstances may require, requesting authority to handle these extra supplies, whereupon we will immediately take the question up with the Foreign Office and advise you of the result.

In my Cable 49 of the 19th I advised that the French Government states values of the shipments made by other committees will be deducted from Northern France C.R.B. monthly allowances. This is the result of a recent cable from the French Ministry, but Mr. Chevrillon thinks that as this was not specified in the original conversations of last August it represents the desire of the French Government rather than an actual regulation.

Please advise if the above now places this matter in order.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. Poland
Director

DOCUMENT NO. 301

Letter, Brown to Poland, *describing the procedure in handling purchases in Holland for the Comité Hollandais*

Rotterdam, 4 May 1917

Commission for Relief in Belgium
London

My Dear Poland:

The Comité Hollandais shipments have now settled down to a fairly steady basis, and it would probably be well to recapitulate the position. These purchases are being made out of a sum of 30,000,000 francs, which has been put at the disposal of this committee, the purchases to be made for the industrial districts of Northern France —Lille, Valenciennes, Roubaix, Tourcoing, etc. The buying is done by the Comité Hollandais, shipments being made by the C.R.B. and

foodstuffs being consigned to the C.R.B. magazines for the C.H. The apportionment to the cities is arranged by the C.H. We inspect certain articles and control weights, customs papers, bills of lading, etc., for all shipments. To meet the necessary expenses, a sum of money is put at our disposal by the C.H. out of which the necessary payments are made and debited to the respective purchases, which are numbered in the same method as our own. The only articles which are being purchased both by the C.H. and ourselves are vegetables, eggs, and poultry. Under the French Government arrangement, meat, including poultry, does not come under the program of the C. H. but we are provisionally allowing them to purchase half of the available quantities. Vegetables and eggs are also being split on a 50 per cent basis, though this arrangement is subject to change as necessity arises.

Up to the end of April we had shipped for this organization 3,426 tons of foodstuffs and six tons of seeds, comprising 969 tons of eggs, 187 tons of rabbits and poultry, and the balance practically entirely vegetables. The shipments during the month of April totaled about 2,000 tons; a monthly recapitulation of the shipments made for their account is being regularly sent you.

Trusting this gives you all the necessary information,

Sincerely yours

(Signed) WALTER LYMAN BROWN

5. *From Relief to Reconstruction. 1917–1919*

In September 1916 Hoover secured an increase in the monthly subsidy for the North of France from Frs. 20,000,000 to Frs. 35,000,000, and at about the same time the British Foreign Office authorized an increased program for the winter of 1916–17.[43] Despite the lack of shipping the Commission managed to import this increased program for the last two months of 1916 and for January 1917. The great crisis brought on by German unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917 made necessary important alterations in the machinery of relief,[44] but in all the chaos of reorganization the Commission managed to import in the five months to June 1917 enough to keep the people alive. Beginning with July 1917 with a comparatively safe route for relief cargoes, importations increased, and there was no serious interruption thereafter. In April 1917 the Americans, being

[43] Chapter iii, Document 93.

[44] Chapter xii shows the effects on the relief organization of America's declaration of war.

no longer neutral, were withdrawn, and the duties of maintaining the German guarantees were taken over by the newly organized Spanish-Dutch Committee of Protection. Representatives of Dutch nationality were placed in the North of France. In spite of the withdrawal of its personnel from the occupied territory, the Commission maintained an office in Brussels headed by Fernand Baetens, and he in conjunction with the President of the Executive Committee of the Comité Français, Mr. Le Blan, continued to administer the relief in Northern France. The district, regional, and communal committees of the Comité Français continued as before, but as time went on the personnel changed. The severe strain told on the older members; many became ill and a few were allowed by the Germans to be repatriated and thus several of the responsible members of the Comité were living in Paris. With a view to strengthening the organization to enable it to carry its responsibilities Hoover took the steps shown in the following documents in the summer of 1918 to reorganize the executive committee.

DOCUMENT NO. 302

Extract of letter, LE BLAN TO GUÉRIN, *describing some of the difficulties of the Comité Français after the departure of the Americans*

BRUSSELS, 2 July 1918

Monsieur Guérin
President of the Comité Exécutif du Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France,
Paris

DEAR PRESIDENT AND FRIEND:

For about a year, that is, since the departure of the American delegates, my friend, Mr. Van Brée, and I have had to resolve or intervene in various questions which touched the real essential principles of our organization. These questions were the care exclusively of the Executive Committee, and this all the more so since it was understood with the direction of the C.R.B. before they left Brussels that the C.F. should have the control of all the accounting operations of the distribution of foodstuffs imported and of the composition of the ration, operations in which formerly the American delegates intervened most effectively. As to the action of the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais, it bears chiefly, as you know, on the control of the guarantees given by the German authorities.

In these last days especially, we have been worried by several

questions which it would have been highly desirable to submit to your judgment. We would cite especially the question of the ravitaillement of the laborers working for the Germans, the supplementary rations to the big towns, the intervention of the communes in the cost of the ration, the advances to the communes, the price of the indigenous flour, etc., etc.

For the examination of all these questions, as also for their solution, we have always tried, whenever we have been able, to consult the delegates of the district, of whom several are members of the Executive Committee. . . . .

You will not forget, moreover, that several members of the Executive Committee, as it was constituted at the beginning, have either gone away, or are not in a position to take effective part in the labors of the organization. . . . .

We would find therefore a special advantage in having a complete and enlarged Executive Committee, the latter to send from Brussels, the administrative center of the committee, the district delegates, armed with a real authority, justifying, vis-á-vis the German authorities, their presence and their meetings in that town. . . . .

A committee thus constituted, and which could meet with at least half its members present, could handle all the principal questions attaching to the organization; we ourselves would act as its delegates, that is to say, we should have as our mission to execute the decisions which it should take.

The composition of this committee would be notified to the German authorities by application of the agreement of 14th April 1915.[45] . . . .

(Signed) M. Le Blan

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 303

Memorandum, Hoover to Pichon, *regarding the necessity of reorganizing the Comité Français*

London, 27 July 1918

Memorandum

Monsieur Pichon

Mr. Minister:

As you are aware, the ravitaillement of Northern France is carried on by the Commission for Relief in Belgium through the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, the members of which were appointed by the Commission for Relief in Belgium in accordance with authority received from the French Government. The Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France has, during the last few months,

[45] Document 283, paragraph 4.

suffered the loss, through absence and death, of several of its members, and we consider it necessary that the committee should be completely reorganized, in order to attain greater efficiency and to secure a better centralization in Brussels. We enclose a memorandum setting forth our views as to the needed reorganization of this committee which we should be glad to discuss with you at your convenience as quickly as possible on a proper working basis. The members of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France who are in Brussels are in complete accord with us on this necessity of reorganization and we have in our possession a letter which they have addressed to Monsieur Guérin asking his opinion on this matter. We think, however, that before this gentleman is consulted it is necessary, in accordance with the essential principles of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, that the matter be discussed between the French Government and ourselves.

We beg to remain,
Yours faithfully

HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 304

Letter, HOOVER TO GUÉRIN, *on the necessity of reorganization of the Comité Français*

LONDON, 14 August 1918

Monsieur Guérin
Paris

DEAR MR. GUÉRIN:

We recently received letters from Monsieur Le Blan in regard to the need for some reorganization of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France. While this is not a great matter, it has been apparent to us for some time that something should be done to strengthen Mr. Le Blan's hands. This is due, in large part, to the lack of direct contact of the American members of the Commission for Relief with the representatives of the districts of Northern France and your own absence from the North of France, and in order that those persons on the ground who, of necessity, must take direct executive action shall be in position to impose their authority on internal questions. We are quite in accord, as no doubt you are, with the general ideas advanced by Monsieur Le Blan.

The Commission for Relief in Belgium, as you know, are held responsible by the French and British Governments for the conduct of the Relief of Northern France and in order to carry out this responsibility it is essential that the internal organization be strengthened. Under authority delegated to us by the Governments, the

reorganization outlined in the attached memorandum has been forwarded to Monsieur Le Blan, as I am sure of your agreement. The arrangement permits of the re-establishment of the *status quo ante* whenever you can return to the occupied territories, and in fact represents a consummation of the administrative measures which we are all taking with the shifting responsibilities which we have to assume. The arrangement in no way affects your own status in carrying on the support to the Comité du Nord de la France and but represents the organization of effective measures due to your necessary absence.

Yours faithfully,

HERBERT HOOVER
Chairman

DOCUMENT NO. 305

Memorandum, BY HOOVER, *on reorganization of Comité Français*

LONDON, 14 August 1918

REORGANIZATION OF THE COMITÉ D'ALIMENTATION DU NORD DE LA FRANCE

The disorganization of the Comité Français through the departure of so many of its members, renders an immediate reorganization necessary. This reorganization will be effected as follows:

The representatives of the six districts, who are also presidents of the district committees, will comprise the Executive Committee of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France (hereinafter called the Comité Français), together with the delegate of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, who is at present Mr. Van Brée; the representative of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, at present Mr. Baetens; the general secretary and the secretary and the active president of the Comité Français. This Executive Committee are to undertake the following duties:

1. The election of an active president, who should be resident in Brussels, and for this office we nominate Mr. Le Blan.
2. To fill all vacancies in the district representation in cooperation with the district committees.
3. While all general decisions as to matters of rationing, distribution policy, finance, and administration shall be subject to the approval of the C.R.B., the Executive Committee will have full authority and discretion in the occupied territories to act to the best interests of the populations concerned, and for this purpose will give general instructions to the district committees, with discretionary powers as to the details of execution.
4. All communications with regard to the above matters, to and from the occupied territories, are to be made exclusively through the channel of the C.R.B.

5. All questions involving the German guarantees and undertakings will, as at present, be under the protection of the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais.

Effective 1st September 1918.

DOCUMENT NO. 306

Resolutions, OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE COMITÉ FRANÇAIS, *regarding the services of the C.R.B.*

[BRUSSELS, September 1918]

COMITÉ D'ALIMENTATION DU NORD DE LA FRANCE

The members of the Executive Committee of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France, meeting at Brussels, the 16th and 21st September 1918, once more express to the Commission for Relief in Belgium their feelings of real gratitude for the material and moral aid given to the inhabitants of Northern France during more than three years, and who, at the same time as they procure for the people the foodstuffs necessary to existence, permit them thus patiently to endure their unhappy fate;

The members of the Executive Committee address to their eminent President, Monsieur Herbert Hoover, and to all his devoted collaborators in the United States and in Europe, a testimonial of the profoundest admiration for the work accomplished;

They are conscious of the difficulties met with, particularly in the beginning of the last year, as well as of the almost superhuman efforts which had to be made to surmount them, and they express to the Commission for Relief in Belgium their sincere thanks and those of the inhabitants of the North of France, for all the efforts they have made in view of their ravitaillement, and are convinced that the general arrangements made to this effect have been dictated solely by the high interests of the cause in question.

The members of the Executive Committee place all their confidence in the Commission for Relief in Belgium, which has in its hands the fate of 1,600,000 French people remaining in the occupied territory, and for whom nine-tenths of their foodstuffs have to be imported from abroad.

They express the wish that there might be assured to the populations under the control of the Commission for Relief in Belgium a minimum ration of 2,000 calories per capita per diem, or a ration having as its basis in general approximately:

400 grams of bread,
50 grams of biscuits or alimentary pastes,
100 grams of feculents,
75 grams of fats or preserved meat,
15 grams of sugar,

Plus the other articles figuring on the program, such as milk, coffee, soap, fish, cocoa, etc.

To this effect, the members allow themselves to propose the monthly importation of:

16,500 tons of wheat,
2,000 tons of maize,
2,000 tons of rice,
3,500 tons of bacon and lard,
2,000 tons of dried vegetables,
1,000 tons of preserved meat,
1,400 tons of sugar, including therein the contingent for manufacturing,

Plus the other articles on the program, following its determined quantities.

Finally, they express the desire that in case of a deficit in one of the branches of importation, it might be found possible to compensate it from another branch, so that the same proportion of food may be furnished at all times to the population so assisted.

Signed, at Brussels, the 16th and 21st September, 1918.

M. Le Blan
Marc Raty
Blondet
Turbot
Labbé

[*Translation*]

The fifth and last of the great assaults in the German drive of 1918 broke before the Franco-American defense between the Marne and the Argonne on the 17th July. The next day the French and Americans counter-attacked between the Aisne and the Marne and the tide of war on the west front definitely turned. Slowly at first, then with gathering speed, the Allied forces through August, September, and October bent back the German line from Verdun to the sea. Gradually the French regions where the Commission had worked were liberated, and before the Armistice they were clear of the enemy. There was still need of relief, and, as has been described in chapter iii,[46] the Governments of France and Belgium asked the C.R.B. to continue for the time being to provision the liberated districts.

With the freeing of the North of France the administration of relief needed no longer to be managed from Brussels, and arrangements were made to replace the long established Comité Français with a new organization, the Comité Géné-

[46] Documents 100 to 116.

ral de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées. The new committee, which retained the existing sub-committees in the districts, came into being with headquarters at Lille on the 18th December, and the C.F. terminated its activities on the 31st. Directly after the Armistice the Commission had itself set up an office in Lille and many of the old members returned to take their places in the headquarters at Lille and the regional offices in Valenciennes, Laon, Charleville, Longwy, or in the office in Paris.

During the period from the Armistice to May 1919, when provisioning was taken over by the French Government, the Commission imported into Northern France 108,000 tons of supplies, and in addition carried out extensive medical relief and, with the co-operation of the U.S. Army and Navy, a temporary housing program by the erection of barracks in the destroyed towns.

DOCUMENT NO. 307

Inter-ministerial instructions, French Government, *relative to ravitaillement of population of the liberated districts*

Paris, 18 December 1918

Inter-Ministerial Instructions on the Ravitaillement of the Civil Populations of the Liberated Regions

The ravitaillement of the liberated regions of the North and East of France, until such time as the normal economic life can be resumed, will be assured under the high authority of the French Government by a committee which will take the name of Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées, avec le concours de la C.R.B. (General Committee of Feeding for the Liberated Regions with the co-operation of the C.R.B.) which will continue the task accomplished with so much devotion during the occupation by the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France.

I. ORGANIZATION

1. The General Committee purposes: (*a*) to assure the distribution and sale of foodstuffs of first necessity; (*b*) to facilitate by every means the resumption of normal life in the domain of ravitaillement, in giving help to co-operative and commercial organizations; (*c*) to ameliorate by every means the material situation of the liberated populations.

2. The general direction of the General Committee will be confided to an Executive Committee, with headquarters (in principle)

at Lille, and composed of: M. Le Blan, President; M. Labbé, General Secretary; the delegates of the districts set out below; Captain W. H. Tuck, Delegate of the C.R.B.; M. Bernheim, Permanent Delegate of the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Blockade and for the Liberated Regions, and the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement will be represented on this Committee in all questions of principle: the first by M. Beri, at present Delegate for Foreign Affairs at the C.R.B.; the second by M. Bluzet, Director at the Ministry of Blockade and for the Liberated Regions; the third by M. Reibel, of the office of the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement, Head of the Department for the Ravitaillement of the Liberated Regions.

For the daily management and for the immediate solution of urgent questions, a permanent delegation of the Executive Committee will be instituted.

This permanent delegation will consist of M. Maurice Le Blan, M. Labbé, Captain Tuck, and M. Bernheim.

3. The liberated regions are grouped in four districts for ravitaillement, including those portions of the following departments which had been occupied: (*a*) District of Lille, portions which had been invaded of the Nord, and of the Pas-de-Calais; (*b*) District of Laon, portions which had been invaded of the Aisne, the Somme and the Oise; (*c*) District of Mezières, portions which had been invaded of the Ardennes and the Marne; (*d*) District of Longwy, portions which had been invaded of the Meurthe and Moselle and of the Meuse.

4. In each district the ravitaillement will be directed by a District Committee and assured in the various arrondissements by an Arrondissement Committee.

The arrondissement will be subdivided into regions the numbers and importance of which will be settled by the Arrondissement Committee.

At the head of each region there will be a Regional Committee and in each commune a Local Committee.

5. In principle, the Local Committees who were functioning during the occupation will remain in power; however, they can submit, in proportion as the normal life of the people is resumed, such modifications as may seem expedient on the suggestion of the Municipal Councils and with the approval of the Arrondissement Committees. The Executive Committee will have the final decision.

The Arrondissement Committees and the Regional Committees will also be composed of the old members who were working during the occupation; they will be designated by the Executive Committee, on the proposal of the delegates of the districts as shown below.

Each Arrondissement Committee will designate one of its members as a permanent delegate to the District Committee. The District Committee is composed of delegates of the district designated by the Executive Committee and the permanent delegates of the Arrondissement Committee; the Commercial Director, charged with the carrying out of the decision, will also be a member of the District Committee.

II. OPERATIONS

1. The Executive Committee has for its duties the general organization and the direction of the ravitaillement, principally the determination of actual needs; they will assure that these needs are provided for with the help of the foodstuffs supplied either by the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement or by the C.R.B.; they will supervise the equitable distribution of these commodities, as well as of the Secours granted by the various committees in their respective districts.

In principle, the Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement will furnish flour, frozen or fresh meat, and potatoes, and the C.R.B. will supply the other commodities.

2. The General Committee for the Ravitaillement of the Liberated Regions is accountable to the French Government and to the C.R.B. for the foodstuffs and other articles which will be delivered to them, respectively, by the one or the other.

These foodstuffs and other commodities will be billed to them in order to be billed again and successively to the District Committees, to the Arrondissement Committees, to the Regional Committees, and to the Local Committees.

3. The financial responsibility of the C.R.B. vis-á-vis the French Government will be covered by the proofs of the distribution made to the General Committee for Ravitaillement of the Liberated Regions.

The financial responsibility of the General Committee vis-á-vis the French Government and the C.R.B. will be covered by the proof of the distribution of goods and Secours to the inhabitants.

Each Distribution Committee should keep such accounts as will permit of the checking of all their operations.

4. The prices of foodstuffs sold to the populations by the Committees will be uniform in all the liberated regions; they will be fixed by the Executive Committee, taking into account the general costs of all kinds which devolve upon the various distributing committees.

5. In order to facilitate the operation of the various ravitaillement committees and to endow them with civil authority, each one of them will be subject to the declaration covered by the Law of 1st July 1901 on Associations.

6. All operations of the General Committee are carried out under the high authority of the Prefects and Sub-Prefects, who are entitled to be present at all meetings of the various ravitaillement committees.

The Minister of Blockade and for the
Liberated Regions,

(Signed) LEBRUN

The Under-Secretary of State for Ravitaillement

(Signed) VILGRAIN

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 308

Extract of letter, POLAND TO P. N. GRAY, *regarding post-Armistice conditions in the North of France and the organization of the Comité de Ravitaillement*

LONDON, 3 January 1919

Prentiss N. Gray, Esq., Assistant Director
Commission for Relief in Belgium
Washington

MY DEAR GRAY:

. . . . . .

Now as to the French situation. I have been chasing about over this territory since November 5th, and except for twenty-four hours am visiting the London office for the first time since that date. The situation in the territory of permanent military operations is simply appalling. The territory where the line remained for some time is an absolute desert, with practically no people in it nor any habitations, and in many regions the ground itself will not be capable of cultivation for some years. Many of the large towns, such as Ypres, La Bassé, Bailleul, St. Quentin, Lens, Armentiéres, are either totally destroyed or uninhabitable. The nice old city of St. Quentin practically has not one habitable house in it. Words could not convey to anyone the desolation of these territories!

The French Government originally intended to take over the ravitaillement of the liberated regions themselves, but when they went over the country they found that the only working organizations were our committees of ravitaillement. They therefore asked us to continue, until conditions should again approach normal, to feed the people. All communications from the North were eliminated, and Dunkirk seemed the only port. The French Government also, because of its great cereal crop in the North and because of the half-price which they charge for bread in the rest of France by means of government subsidies, decided to take over supplies of flour. We are having enormous difficulties in getting anything through this port of Dunkirk, however, and in future, now that we have established rail communication through Ghent-Brussels, will limit the imports through to about eight or ten thousand tons per month. . . . . We have Sperry at this port, doing as usual, splendid work, but he has come up against a quarrel between the British and the French as to the use of the port, which has been taken over as a disembarking port by the British.

Practically all the locks and nearly all the bridges over the Lys, and Scheldt canals have been blown up. From the way things are going, I do not expect water communication to be put in service for three or four months, and except for the military lines, which are so congested we can hardly use them, the rail situation is also terrible. It is a big fight, but the distribution in Belgium is assured, and I think we can say the same as to food in France.

Our main concern now is to get shelter for the evacuées, who

continue to pour into the devastated regions of France. The Belgian situation is much less severe, and is being taken care of by the Belgian Government, with little or no assistance from us. In the department du Nord and parts of the Aisne and Somme, the need for shelter is acute. I succeeded in getting the United States Northern Bombing Squadron, with its transport and personnel, consisting of several hundred men, to volunteer to transport and set up barracks for us in these territories. They are doing splendid work. The military are also co-operating with us to the fullest extent, and, with the splendid assistance which is being offered to Hoover by both the U.S. Army and Navy, I believe we can do a fine and terribly needed work in all these regions. How long it will last is a great problem. I think the emergency will be passed in three or four months, and that we can begin gradually to withdraw.

Meanwhile the great question is to get the ships of food to supply our tremendously increased monthly requirements,[47] and in that we are depending absolutely on you and Rickard. I know your great desire is to get in the game over here, but I am sure that the very greatest service you can do to Belgium and France is to devote your energy and abilities to the situation in the United States, at least for the present. We are counting on you for this, particularly as Hoover will be so tremendously tied up here in the great problems, both political and physical, of relief in other parts of Europe.

I send you a copy of the Reorganization plan for the North of France. The first steps toward reorganizing our force were taken with the aid of Kittredge as Chief Representative. He was with me for more than a month and a half, and was of the very greatest service in reorganizing the territory. After that, Admiral Sims insisted on his return to London, and we have just gotten Tuck in his place. At present the organization is: Captain Tuck, Chief Representative, Lille (Galpin in charge of office at Lille), assisted by Wellington for the Western Section, Department du Nord, and Richardson at Valenciennes for the North-Eastern Section and a strip of the Aisne Department; Dorsey Stevens at No. 1 and Robinson Smith No. 2 station at Laon, Department of the Aisne & Somme; Wickes at Charleville; Bowden at Longwy; Dr. Leach in charge of medical relief in the Western section and Dr. Malabre in charge of relief in the Eastern section; Sperry in charge of Dunkirk; Wilson, one of our men from the London office, in charge of the Breskens-Sluis-Bruges-Lille line of supply; Chatfield and Baetens in Brussels, in charge of the supplies through Belgium. Torrey is in charge of the Paris office (Chevrillon, as you know, being absent). Simpson, who was in charge in Paris, has gone to Serbia. Lieutenant Forter, of the Navy, with a staff of about five or six naval officers, is in charge of transportation and barrack erection. Major Krueger, of the Army, has been detailed to assist us in matters of accounts. This will give you a vague idea of the general situation. . . . .

(Signed) W. B. POLAND

[47] See chapter iii, Document 113.

DOCUMENT NO. 309

Memorandum, of functions of the C.R.B., C.F., and C.R. in the liberated districts

LONDON, 7 January 1919

MEMORANDUM

Mr. Poland has furnished information as to arrangements recently made between the parties concerned, and in connection therewith this memorandum has been prepared with a view of stating the effect of the new arrangements to those connected with the accounts of the concerns interested.

References:

C.R.B. represents Commission for Relief in Belgium
C.F. represents Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France
C.R. represents Comité Général de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées

It is understood:

1. That the C.F. will cease its operations at the 31st December 1918.

2. That from the 1st January 1919, the ravitaillement of the civil populations of the Liberated Regions of France will be conducted by the C.R. at Lille.

3. That the assets and liabilities of the C.F. at the 31st December 1918 will be transferred to the C.R.

4. That the C.R.B. (through its Rotterdam office) will supply the C.R. with foodstuffs, etc., as previously supplied to the C.F.

5. That the C.R.B. (through its Rotterdam office) will invoice direct to the C.R. for all foodstuffs, etc., so supplied.

6. That the C.R. will credit "C.R.B. London, Merchandise Account" with the invoices so rendered by the C.R.B. Rotterdam.

7. That for other transactions between the C.R.B. and the C.R. the latter will open an account under the head of "C.R.B. London, Current Account."

8. That items debited or credited by the C.R. to the C.R.B. London will be advised by the former, and on the contrary, any items debited or credited to the C.R. by the C.R.B. London will be advised by the latter.

9. That the C.R. will forward at the close of each month statements of:

a) C.R.B. London, Merchandise Account
b) C.R.B. London, Current Account

showing commencing balance, entries during the month, and balance at end of month, so that accounts between the C.R.B. London and the C.R. may be kept in agreement.

10. That the C.R.B. will have a sub-office at Lille under the management of Captain W. H. Tuck.

11. That the C.R.B. Lille office will be conducted on the same lines as the C.R.B. Brussels office and will send to London (monthly) statements of its transactions.

12. That the C.R.B. Lille office accounts will be examined at a later date at Lille by the Auditors of the C.R.B.

13. That the C.R.B. Rotterdam office will open a "C.R.B. London, Lille Account," for the purpose of recording any transactions, on a similar system to that in force between the C.R.B. Rotterdam office and the C.R.B. Brussels office.

14. That the C.R.B. Rotterdam office will prepare a statement of monthly issues to the C.R. Such statement to be examined and certified by the C.R. and returned to the C.R.B. Rotterdam office for despatch to C.R.B. London office.

(Signed) G. I. Gay, *Assistant Director*

R. H. Jones, *Accountant Department*

6. *The Destitute*

Nothing has been said in the preceding documents of the care of the destitute in Northern France, where conditions placed this phase of relief on a different basis than in Belgium.[48] In establishing the work in the North of France, Hoover acted on the belief, in which the French Government concurred, that the situation could not be handled by charitable contributions. The funds used to support the relief in Northern France were, therefore, entirely government subsidies, and in the application of relief every individual in occupied France was considered as destitute and was supplied with a ration. For accounting purposes the Commission accepted receipts in various forms from the communes where the ultimate distribution was made, and these it held as final records of the transactions. Thus provisions were, in fact, sold by the Commission at prices which it fixed from time to time. These sale prices, adjusted to conform to the cost of the goods, included a margin as a reserve against exchange losses and loss from deterioration or destruction of goods. The Commission periodically struck a balance, and if the extent of this reserve justified such action, a sum in local currency was applied to benevolent distribution. As the years passed the disbursements of this character increased, and on the liquidation of its operations the Commission was able to turn over to French committees large sums, which were effectively used for the relief of destitution in the devastated regions.[49]

[48] Chapter xv concerns the mobilization of funds for the destitute of Belgium.

[49] See chapter xvi; Gay, *Statistics*, pp. 76–79.

As has been said the Commission did not appeal to the general public for charitable aid for Northern France, but to meet the great need for clothing, it distributed in these regions a portion of the used clothing collected in the United States and England in 1917–18.[50] In the last days of the Commission's activity in Northern France a sum of $47,515.92 was placed in the hands of the director of the Commission by generous donors for carrying out special benevolent work.

When in the summer of 1919 the French Government assumed the responsibility for provisioning the devastated areas, the Comité de Ravitaillement was dissolved. In accord with the Commission a new body, the Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées, was organized to carry on the relief of the destitute and especially child welfare work begun by the Commission and by the C.R. The "benevolent" funds remaining were turned over to the new committee. As soon as the Comité d'Assistance was in operation, the Commission withdrew the last of its American representatives from the North of France.

DOCUMENT NO. 310

Memorandum, by POLAND, *describing the organization and functions of the Comité d'Assistance*

NEW YORK, 11 February 1921

MEMORANDUM

In April 1919 it was evident that conditions had again become sufficiently normal to justify the Commission for Relief in Belgium in winding up its work of feeding the 2,000,000 people of the occupied regions of Northern France, which had been undertaken in 1915 at the request of the French Government and was continued at their request after the Armistice.

It was also foreseen that the charitable activities of the Commission should be terminated so far as concerned direct intervention by an American staff. In order to avoid interruption when we withdrew and in accordance with the policy always insisted upon by Mr. Hoover, that the actual work should be carried out by a personnel of the country, definite steps were taken to place the C.R.B. benevolent activities exclusively in the hands of the French.

The Comité d'Assistance des Régions Libérées d'Accord de la C.R.B. was therefore organized with Mr. Hoover as Chairman and

[50] See chapter xv. Gift clothing to the value of almost $5,000,000 was sent to Northern France in 1918–19.

Mr. Poland, Mr. Rickard, Mr. Shaler, and Mr. Tuck, Directors, and Mr. Chevrillon, Treasurer, representing the American group, Monsieur Labbé and a distinguished body of French doctors and men of affairs, representing French interests. Regional centers were established, which, in turn, organized local distribution committees, composed in large part of those who had been identified with the C.R.B. organization for the past four years. The Regional Directors formed an Executive Committee with M. Labbé as President. M. Labbé was Chief of the Executive Committee of the Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France during the terrible years of German occupation, and after the Armistice was President of the Comité de Ravitaillement des Régions Libérées. He is now Director of Education of Liberated Regions. Dr. Lambret, one of the celebrated surgeons of France, is Manager. Dr. Osset, a distinguished doctor for children, has especial charge of the "Consultation Nourisson." Senator Dron, who is also Mayor of Turcoing, widely known for his influence in the affairs of the North, and in large part the originator of the "Consultation Nourisson," is another member of the Executive Committee. M. Paul Beri, for two years representing the French Government as Liaison Officer to the Commission for Relief in Belgium and at present Assistant Director of Credit Commercial de France, is a member. M. Chevrillon, Treasurer, devoted C.R.B. representative in France during the whole war period, although a Frenchman, represents the Commission directly upon the Executive Committee. Other members of the Executive Committee and a small paid staff are persons of the highest standing and devotion to relief in the Liberated Regions.

In June 1919, the benevolent work which had been carried out by the C.R.B. largely through the men and women who afterward became associated in the Comité d'Assistance, was definitely turned over to this organization. This work consisted principally of "Goûtes Scolaire," a supplementary meal of biscuits and cocoa given to 40,000 or 50,000 French children; Child Clinics, by means of which children were examined, washed, freed from parasites, assigned medical treatment—or more usually special diets to counteract the effects of malnutrition; "Assistance Discrète," by means of which sums were distributed to members of the ruined families of the devastated regions to assist them to become once more self-supporting; Special Relief measures.

In 1919 some 7,000 children and in 1920, over 10,000 children were sent to health camps along the North Coast, where they received medical attention, a diet to conteract their years of undernourishment, and were also given a certain amount of school instruction. The way in which they recovered under this treatment was a matter of wonder. The results were so good that this work has now been taken over by the Government.

In 1920 "Consultation Nourisson" was started all over the devastated regions. This concerns itself with the care of very young children from birth to about 18 months or two years, as well as care of mothers. The mothers receive expert medical advice and a donation of food, money, or medicine, as the circumstances require. The

cost works out to about twelve to fifteen francs per child per month, and the results up to date, in reducing infant mortality, have been remarkable. In the Liberated Regions of France as of December 1st, 1920 there were 441 "Consultations," at which were employed 383 doctors, 120 nurses, 435 "Sage Femmes," 392 secretaries—a personnel of 1,330. There were 34,000 children being cared for at these centers, at a total cost to that date of Frs. 4,526,000.

Other expenditures for "Goûtes," "Vacance Scolaire," Child Clinics, "Assistance Discrète," and Special Relief, have amounted to Frs. 5,676,412, making a total already expended of Frs. 10,203,000. The funds which have been made available to December 1st, 1920 through the Comité d'Assistance and the earlier distributions of the C.R.B. Benevolent Fund amounted approximately to Frs. 26,595,000, of which a balance remained of approximately Frs. 16,392,000.

Future Operations.—The number of children cared for will very soon reach 45,000, which at 12 francs per month will require an expenditure of Frs. 540,000.

It is considered important that assistance be given to the most destitute of the expectant and nursing mothers. If this is undertaken the Comité estimate a monthly expenditure of	Frs.	108,000
Administration and Special Relief will amount to		52,000
Requiring a total monthly budget of		700,000
Or, per annum	Frs.	8,400,000

At this rate the present funds will last but two years.

However, the benefits of the "Vacance Scolaire" were so apparent that the Department Bienfaisance of the Liberated Regions has taken over the whole activity. The results obtained by the "Consultation Nourisson" in the reduction of infant mortality, the raising of the standard of child life, and the education of the mothers are so remarkable that it has been strongly endorsed in the French Assembly, a resolution of thanks to Mr. Hoover having been passed by that body. Members of the Executive Committee have strong ground to hope that the whole or a portion of this work may be taken in charge by the Ministry of the Liberated Regions and that eventually it may be spread all over France, a splendid endorsement of the Comité's progressive work, made possible by the C.R.B.

If this is done, the unexpended funds of the Comité d'Assistance may be constituted into a Foundation, the income from which can be assigned to permanent child-welfare work. It has been suggested that such income might be directed to the care of expectant and nursing mothers, or to the establishment at industrial centers in the North of France of standardized sanitary laiteries to provide high-grade test milk to mothers and young children.

Another suggestion is that the balance available after 1920 be used as an endowment for a University of Labor to be established in the devastated regions as a permanent C.R.B. memorial.

The approximate financial position of the Comité d'Assistance, as of 1st December 1920, is as follows:

Made available from C.R.B. Benevolent Fund, C.R.B. allocations from "profits," transfers from the Comité de Ravitaillement of unexpended C.R.B. allocations and other funds, C.R.B. allocation through the A.R.A.		Frs. 26,585,000
Expenditures for Child Clinics, Supplementary School Meals, "Vacance Scolaire," "Assistance Discrète"		
Special Relief	Frs. 5,676,412	
Consultation Nourisson	Frs. 4,525,588	10,203,000
Balance, as of 1st December 1920 (subject to correction)		Frs. 16,392,000

(Signed) W. B. Poland

DOCUMENT NO. 311

Letter, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Poland, *relating to the liquidation of C.R.B. activities and expressing the gratitude of the French people to the Commission*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris
22 July 1919

Mr. W. B. Poland, Paris

Monsieur le Directeur:

In your letter of the 15th July you were good enough to inform me of the work accomplished by the C.R.B. in these last months. Although the C.R.B. had ceased to occupy itself with the ravitaillement of the devastated regions, they had continued their benevolent work during the month of June, in the medical care and work of assistance for children. They had, moreover, taken steps to turn over little by little to French personnel the whole organization of its committees, in such a way that at the 1st July all active participation on their part ceased. There remains but to liquidate the accounts of the institution, which will be done in the next few weeks.

The C.R.B. leaves as a last testimonial of its charitable activities a benevolent fund for the devastated regions, an offering instituted by the C.R.B., which amounts at present to 6 million francs. Monthly allocations will be made under the following three heads:

1. Child clinics and extra feeding of debilitated children
2. "Assistance Discrète"
3. General benevolence

You will indicate to me how, with the help of the Ministry of Liberated Regions and with the funds which you will receive from the local administrations, this work of assistance to children can be continued until the end of the school year (1st August 1920).

You will be in a position to allocate about 225,000 francs to account No. 1 and about 125,000 francs to each of the accounts 2 and 3.

Besides this, you hope that these funds can be increased by contributions coming from the United States, and from other sources of revenue, without any profit being made from these operations.

In your consideration, this institution should constitute a remembrance bequeathed by the Commission to the people for whom they have worked during four and a half years, and that it should become one of the ties which will continue to unite the people of the United States with the people of the North of France.

I have taken note of this information with the deepest interest. I recognize therein the spirit of benevolence and sympathy toward my country which has never ceased to animate the C.R.B., as much under the direction of Mr. Hoover as under your efficient and devoted care. I am sure that our populations will keep the memory of all that has been done for them by the C.R.B., and that it will be, even more so since you wish it, a precious tie between the United States and France. I have seen the C.R.B. at work, I have been able to appreciate it, and to appreciate your labor, and it is most agreeable to me to testify to it, and to renew to you, Monsieur le Directeur, the assurance of all my sympathy and my most cordial sentiments.

(Signed) LAROCHE

Le Ministre Plenipotentaire
Sous-Directeur d'Europe

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 312

Letter, FRENCH MINISTER OF THE LIBERATED REGIONS TO POLAND, *conveying the thanks of the French Government for the services rendered by the Commission*

PARIS, 6 September 1919

W. B. Poland, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France

DEAR SIR:

I have taken note, with the greatest interest, of your letter informing me that the "Commission for Relief in Belgium and Northern France," upon the termination of its work of ravitaillement in the liberated regions, had set up a Committee for the distribution of the "Benevolent Fund" which it has collected for the devastated regions of France and which is destined for Child Welfare and Medical Assistance work.

This new evidence of generosity and devotion shown by the C.R.B. worthily crowns the charitable work it has carried on in the liberated regions during and after the enemy occupation, both in the sphere of feeding and of assisting the population.

Whilst assuring you of my whole-hearted support in helping it to carry out this new work, I have particular pleasure in expressing to you the gratitude of the French Government for the eminent services rendered by the Commission.

I shall be glad if you will kindly transmit to your collaborators the thanks of the French Government which is happy to see the close bonds which unite France to the great American Republic knotted yet more solidly in consequence of this new manifestation of sympathy shown by the C.R.B. to our liberated peoples.

Pray accept, etc., etc., ...

A. LEBRUN

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 313

Letter, PRESIDENT OF THE COMITÉ D'ASSISTANCE TO POLAND, *expressing the gratitude of the people of the liberated regions to the Commission and the American people*

LILLE, 24 December 1919

W. Babcock Poland, Esq.
Director of the C.R.B.

DEAR SIR:

More than a year has passed since we once more became members of the great French family, an event which necessarily modified our relations with the C.R.B. The French Government and later on private initiative have progressively replaced the salutary aid accorded so generously by the C.R.B. to our regions since the spring of 1915. You know, as well as Mr. Hoover, what gratitude your concerted labors have awakened in our hearts. Let us express it once more, fully conscious of the service that the C.R.B. rendered to our populations during the interminable duration of this horrible war. The C.R.B. has given us the means of resisting physiological deterioration, and, what is of even greater value, of fighting against the weakening of our morale.

This task once accomplished, the Committee might have considered its work completed. But doubtless it had become too attached to those whom it had saved from so many evils, to abandon them so abruptly. It desired its benevolent work to continue, not so much for the benefit of the adult population, who were returning little by little to normal conditions of life, as for the young and adolescent who had been so hindered in their development by insufficient food, and for the little children of our devastated regions, whose mothers found themselves deprived of those helpful institutions whose mission it is to combat infant mortality and to prepare the way for robuster generations. The C.R.B. has therefore founded a system of relief work whose activities extend over the whole of the liberated regions. It indicated at the outset its express intention of employing

a very considerable portion of its funds toward the creation of meals for schoolchildren, a substantial supplement to their food, which by degrees is restoring the health and strength of the children in our schools who have become anemic owing to the privations of the war.

We are happy to have been chosen by the C.R.B. to be the dispensers of its bounty. We are endeavoring to respect its intentions, which are so consonant with the general good, and we thank it with our whole heart for having followed up in so useful a way its humanitarian work during the period of occupation.

For four years, in spite of our anguish, in spite of our fears, in spite of our mourning and misery, the C.R.B. furnished us with the means of making every Christmas a little less somber, of giving back to every family a little joy for this festival, and reminding them, for at least one day in the year, that they should keep their faith in the future and yet hope for a happy issue. How could we lose such memories? What a pleasure it was for the French directors of the Comité d'Alimentation to distribute the Christmas biscuits and chocolate! We thank the C.R.B. again and yet again.

We send it the expression of our gratitude, to all without exception, uniting in the same feeling of sympathy its President, Herbert C. Hoover, its Director, W. Babcock Poland, and every American citizen who lent it their help and their support. We wish them all a happy Christmas!

We shall be obliged if you will convey this to the C.R.B. and we beg you, dear Sir, to accept the homage of our most devoted sentiments.

The President
(Signed) E. LABBÉ

[*Translation*]

Chapter VII

THE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVES

Most of the documents of this book deal with the relations of the Commission with the governments with whom its affairs brought it into contact. The public relations of the Commission were, of course, much broader than this, for they included both the hundreds of thousands of men and women in Allied and neutral lands who contributed money and services to Belgian relief through the C.R.B.[1] and the people of Belgium and the North of France to whom the relief was given. In the latter category, which is the subject of this chapter, relations were maintained through the American representatives of the Commission scattered through the provinces of Belgium and Northern France.

The Commission's organization in its full development in the occupied territories included two American representatives, responsible to Brussels headquarters, in each of the eleven Belgian and six French provinces.[2] The duties of these representatives were varied, unconventional, and interesting, and they are more clearly shown by informal accounts such as those which follow than by the formal reports which the delegates periodically made. Both accounts given below were written shortly after the authors had been withdrawn from the service they describe as a result of the declaration of war by the United States.

The first contingent of ten of those selected by the Com-

[1] This is the subject of chapter xv.

[2] Belgium is divided into nine provinces, but for purposes of relief there were eleven "Provincial Committees" responsible for the following areas: Antwerp, Brabant, Brussels Agglomeration, East Flanders, West Flanders (north), West Flanders (south), Hainaut, Liège, Limbourg, Luxembourg, and Namur. Brussels and suburbs thus had a provincial organization separate from the province of Brabant, of which this city is a part. The areas of East and West Flanders in the Army Zone were divided into three provincial organizations in conformity with arbitrary lines established by the German armies.

All occupied French territory was within the Army Zone and its division for relief purposes corresponded exactly with the divisions maintained by the German armies. Six "District Committees" were responsible for the six areas: Lille, Valenciennes, St. Quentin, Vervins, Charleville, and Longwy. See Gay, *Statistics*, chapter ii.

mission as delegates reached Belgium in December 1914.[3] The last Americans left the occupied territories in April 1917, as soon after the American declaration of war as they could be relieved by representatives of the Spanish-Dutch Committee created for that purpose.[4] Altogether about one hundred and thirty men were engaged at one time or another in this service during these two and one-half years, but only about thirty-five were so employed at one time. During 1917–1918 these former representatives were engaged in war service of some description. After the Armistice a number rejoined the Commission to take part in its reconstruction work in the devasted regions; others, as members of the American Relief Administration of which Mr. Hoover was also chairman, contributed the experience gained in Belgium to the organization of relief in Central and Eastern Europe.

1. *The American Delegate in Belgium*

DOCUMENT NO. 314

An account, by Francis Cogswell Wickes, *of the duties and activities of the C.R.B. provincial representatives in Belgium*

London, May 1917

The Délégué Américain.—The provincial representative of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, the *délégué américain* as he was most commonly known to the people, is doubtless the one figure who stands forth most clearly in the popular Belgian mind in connection with the relief work in that country during the great war. . . . .

In regard to anything concerning the ravitaillement or relief work, if something was considered to be wrong, or if assistance were needed, the solution was, of course, "to write to the *délégué américain,*" or better still to go to visit him in person. But more than this, people came to him on all possible varieties of other matters: for release from military arrest, exemption of private horses from requisition, with requests for passports for commercial enterprises which it was desired to carry on with foreign countries,

[3] Three other young Americans who had gone to Belgium for the Commission prior to this time—E. D. Curtis on the 1st November, G. S. Jackson and Amos D. Johnson, Jr., on the 20th November—were subsequently assigned to duties as delegates. Others selected as delegates during December 1914 brought the total at the end of that month to twenty-five. See chapter ii, Documents 27–30.

[4] See chapter xii.

letters to be sent to friends in America, for advice in a thousand and one different ways, down even to applications for a position as nursemaid in America after the war. In all these latter matters, unless they could be found to have some connection with the ravitaillement, the representative was of course powerless. He would listen, however, with sympathy and interest to each person's particular difficulty, whatever it might be. He would assure the person that he would do anything in his power to assist him, attempting at the same time to indicate the limits of his true power, and his lack of competency in matters outside the ravitaillement. Often the representative was enabled to render real service by directing the inquirer to the proper authority or by giving him helpful counsel regarding his case, and almost always he could feel assured that he had given moral support had it been but to listen sympathetically to the story of some poor creature for whom nothing could be done.

So it was that the reputation of the *délégué américain* persisted to the very end; and though, as the months and the years of the occupation dragged on, the people gradually came to realize more fully the nature of his position and the limitations of his powers, they continued to regard him as a powerful protector of their oppressed country in its time of trouble. So it was that when, toward the end of March 1917, the rumor spread like wildfire through the populace that *les Américains* were leaving,[5] the question on everyone's lips was: "What will become of us now?" Patriotically they rejoiced that their country had gained a great ally in the cause of justice, but individually they felt themselves in very truth abandoned, with no longer a protector to whom they might turn.

Such was the *délégué américain* as he existed in the popular mind. In reality he was a somewhat different and infinitely more humble sort of a person, as will be well imagined.

The first delegates.— . . . . The original group which came as the result of the first hasty call for volunteers was chiefly composed of American Rhodes scholars and others who chanced to be studying at Oxford and Cambridge and who possessed a certain spirit of adventure together with a desire for service. Their original knowledge of French was often most scanty; their acquaintance with the country they went to relieve betrayed sometimes the deepest ignorance, and their conceptions of its conditions as a result of the German invasion were even less accurate. They left hurriedly, with a few rough-and-ready clothes, such as one takes for a few weeks' outing in the country. In more than one case they came with tents and full camping equipments, prepared to sleep out nights and to do engineering work in the devastated country, not to mention their stores of chocolate and condensed milk intended for distribution to the starving populace which they would encounter on the wayside. They expected to serve but a few weeks—no one dreamed that the war would continue for years. Their ignorance was pardonable. Few people in the outside world then knew what were the actual conditions in Belgium, and none realized the enormity of the task which

[5] See chapter xii.

was being undertaken. They discovered conditions far different from what they had conceived and soon found themselves embarked upon a project whose vastness they had never imagined. Neither their anticipations nor their training had in any way prepared them for the work which they were to do. They did the work, however, and it will be admitted that they succeeded in it. For they were intelligent thinkers with a practical turn of mind, a systematic understanding of conditions and points of view, and an ingrained quality of adaptability, accustomed to independence and initiative—they were Anglo-Saxons of the western world. What they lacked in specific preparation they more than made up for in their zeal and in their possession of more fundamentally essential characteristics.

During the course of its history the Commission's personnel was constantly changing. It comprised in its members men of all ages, varieties of experience, and professions. With but few exceptions they all rendered valuable service. But the most representative provincial member, and, it may be added, the one who in the majority of cases was most successful in his provincial work, was of the type which it is here attempted to portray. He was perhaps successful above all by reason of the very fact of his youth and his lack of experience in any specific and narrowing direction. The relief work was something unique in the world's history, for which no ordinary training could in any real sense prepare a man. Lack of practical experience in life was perhaps rather an asset, as it left open a greater degree of adaptability. As the months and years passed, the original group of Rhodes scholars largely disappeared. The men who replaced them came more often directly from America. But the average man who found his way into the provinces continued to be of much the same type and caliber—one who in the latter days was only slightly more prepared, in point of information, to meet the unusual conditions and duties with which he was confronted. His fitness for the position always continued to depend upon personality rather than upon previous training.

Duties in the early period.—The official position of the provincial member of the Commission, first called *delegate,* in what may broadly be considered the first phase of the work, and later *representative* in the succeeding period, may be summed up by the statement that it was his duty to see to it that within his province, the guarantees and conventions between the Commission and the different belligerent powers, upon which the relief work was based, were observed; that on the one hand the imported merchandise was consumed solely by the civil population, and that the native products, guaranteed against requisition, were permitted to reach the same destination; that on the other hand the food and clothing were equitably distributed without waste, leakage or individual favoritism, and that the prescriptions and rules necessary to this end were enforced. In short, the provincial representative did in small what the Commission was doing in large throughout the entire occupied country, in so far as its internal activities are concerned.

This brief statement of the representative's duties does not, however, give any notion of the many and varied activities which the

position involved in its official aspect, not to mention the sometimes quite as important unofficial relations which his situation equally entailed.

. . . . . .

In those first days of the war the highly developed and largely industralized country of Belgium had been, without warning, reduced, in a day as it were, to a primitive and almost medieval state by the fact of hostile military occupation. For the population posts, railways, telegraph, and telephone had suddenly ceased to exist, and almost everywhere the public were interdicted from going from one town to the next. For the first months there were not even newspapers available to the people, and the complete isolation of each community from the rest of the world was thus almost perfect. Events of only a few weeks ago—things of before the fateful day of August 4th—had suddenly become relegated to a dim and distant past, which seemed more of a dream than a reality. The national life was dead. Social lines, in a measure, disappeared. Industrial life largely ceased. The Government had gone. The communal authorities alone, even in these dark days of dejection, continued to assert a certain degree of independence and a limited exercise of their functions, and to provide the rallying point for the later gradual awakening from the coma which had overtaken the population. The country, as a whole, was numbed and inanimate, bowed down under the sudden and terrible blow of conquest. The moral isolation had even a greater effect than the physical barriers. Hope was for the moment gone; there was no one to whom the people could turn; no one who could protect them. Though accustomed all their lives to the utmost facilities which modern civilization can provide, once suddenly reduced and under such violent circumstances to a primitive state of existence, former habits of thought ceased, distances assumed the proportions of the middle ages, the next town became a foreign land from which came only rumors and the most venturesome of travelers, and the outside world was but a vague and misty unreality.

. . . . . .

In the early days the provincial delegate was much on the road. He made regular weekly rounds of his province, attending in turn the meetings of the different regional committees, which might be as many as twenty or more in a single province; bringing them the correspondence and instructions from the Comité Provincial; announcing what shipments could be expected, and how, and when; receiving from them in turn the post destined to the provincial committee, also the money paid for food by the communes, to be transported to the provincial center. He often found himself lodging on the road with one or another committee member. To these regular trips were added the frequent impromptu excursions called for by emergencies of one sort or another—a bridge fallen into a canal, thereby blocking the lighters, and the province in imminent danger of running out of food if the obstacle were not immediately removed; a train off the track, trucks broken open and food strewn about; an entire region on the point of famine, not to mention the danger lest that food get to an improper destination, possibly into German hands.

Canals and railways being, of course, in military control, the delegate must first rush to the proper German office to set the ponderous wheels of officialdom in motion; then he would dash off to the spot of the calamity, see the local military authorities; then summon whatever local Belgian influence he could find, round up sufficient workmen, put them to work, and finally supervise the job in person, quite probably actively lending a hand in extracting the débris from the canal or in righting the derailed truck. Again it was perhaps an ignorant *Ortskommandant* who was reported to have requisitioned the stores of a local *magasin*. The matter must be remedied forthwith, and again recourse was had directly to powerful officials, until the goods were restituted or replaced. A word from the delegate would often secure passes and privileges for Belgian committee members, when they themselves had moved powers high and low without avail. The delegate alone could get railway trucks for food shipments, he alone could do many things where the German authorities were concerned, and so in a measure there was a certain foundation for the exaggerated ideas entertained by the popular mind in respect to the delegate's powers. This prestige and respect in the eye of the military did not always persist, alas! It gradually but perceptibly passed, as did also those happy days when the delegate could gaily run his car, without stopping, across the frontier into Holland, merely waving his hand to the sentry as he passed and shouting something about "Amerikaner."

The regional committees, and even the local communal committees, possessed a large measure of independence to deal with the local situation as seemed to them most wise. Uniform prices and rations were indicated by the Comité Provincial. Each committee kept its own books and accounts as it deemed best, and was counted upon to administer affairs honestly, equitably, and as local conditions seemed to demand. This confidence and independence was in almost all cases justified, although it certainly was neither centralization nor uniformity. The provincial committee was rather small at first, and concerned itself chiefly with financial matters and with the reception and reshipment of the food; it was executive, but as yet in a very small measure legislative. The delegate, of course, had an office, but he spent little of his time there. His work was in his province, and whatever problems arose he had to solve them there—Brussels could not help him even when he appealed to it. He might occasionally go to Brussels when shipments did not seem to be coming to his province as he felt they should, but even then it was generally easier to run out to Rotterdam or Maestricht to see what the trouble was. In the mind of the provincial delegate his duty was easily stated; his job was to get the food to the people, above all to *his* people, for his decentralized position tended to make him a provincial delegate in more than one sense. In the performance of his duty it was incumbent upon him to see that first of all sufficient food arrived in the province, and then that it moved properly out into the regions and to the communes. If there were a hitch in the machinery, he lent a hand to set it right again. It was his function to act as the medium of communication between the various committees, and it

was he who acted as intermediary in all negotiations and relations between the Germans and the Belgian committeemen. For the rest he tried to be on friendly terms with everyone, including the Germans.

Unofficial service.—In these, his more purely unofficial relations, the delegate also rendered valuable service to the work in which he was engaged. The universality of his own position served as an important element in helping to consolidate the Belgian committees which represented in their members all political and religious creeds and all social castes; though it must always be remembered that the chief factor to bring this about—and one conversant with Belgian social relations can alone realize the impossibility of the task under normal conditions—was the national crisis and the clear patriotic duty to which all men rallied with the most admirable spirit. It could not always be avoided, however, that a certain degree of class or party friction arose. The delegate would then appear to smooth away the difficulty, and his point of view would be almost uniformly accepted, his impartiality and independence being universally recognized. It sometimes occurred that it was necessary to apply unpopular measures. The responsible committee heads, involved as they were in the social and political system, lacked perhaps the courage and often the real influence to enforce them. Recourse was again had to the delegate whose word was law and against which there could be no question. To his honor let it be said that the delegate rarely exercised, and probably in no case abused, these very wide dictatorial powers which his unusual position gave him. In the vast majority of cases questions were decided in the ordinary parliamentary fashion by the committees themselves on the basis of the majority view, and after general discussion in which the delegate gave his opinion simply as an individual, though always it carried weight. His absolute decree occurred only in vital matters after mature reflection and careful consideration with the chief Belgian committee members. To this discretion, as much as to his broad personal relations, is largely due the fact that, in the best administered provinces, the delegate maintained his authority throughout the entire period of the work.

Duties in the later period.—Following the first few months of rather rough-and-ready relief work, uncentralized and lacking in specific outline, there came the period of higher organization and more systematic administration—what may broadly be considered the second of two general phases of the work as a whole in Belgium, and, in consequence, of the position of the delegate, or representative, as he came to be called in this later period in the province. The transition from one stage to another was of course very gradual, and the line between the two periods can in no way be considered as clearly marked. Many factors led to this development, but only certain of these elements need here be indicated. Chief among them was, on one hand, the return of Belgium to a more or less normal state of external conditions, with the general permission of circulation and the reopening of posts and railways to the general public; and, on the other hand, the general realization that the war might

last years and that the ravitaillement must be prepared to go on indefinitely. The Commission's work had ceased to be an emergency relief measure; it had become a vast distributing organization upon which depended the existence of seven millions of human beings in Belgium and upward of two millions in the North of France, and it must be made to operate with regularity, system, and precision in accordance. These features, together with the markedly growing tendency on the part of the military to centralize all their own authority in Brussels, thus rendering it gradually impossible for the provincial delegate to achieve anything through the local authorities when negotiations with the Germans were necessary, all made for the organization and centralization of the work on a broadly uniform basis and mitigated against the former almost absolute independence and often somewhat loose administration of the provinces.

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The representative was no longer necessary as a medium of communication between the regions. The posts were open to correspondents. Several Belgian delegates from each regional committee attended the weekly meetings of the Comité Provincial, and carried back the instructions and information to their regional meetings, at which in turn were represented all the communes of the region. The weekly rounds of the province were thus dispensed with. The emergency dashes to the rescue of blocked transports also largely disappeared. Under the efficient administration of the German Army, once well organized, accidents no longer seemed to happen. Furthermore, things were better organized on the part of the committees. Regions no longer lived in the former hand-to-mouth fashion, and it was rare if a week's delay could affect the distribution to the people. Strained situations always might arise, however, and it was remarkable that, even despite the later and more perfect organization, they did not occur more often. At least one representative can remember spending the better part of a Christmas Day running about his province, trying to urge forward lighters blocked by high waters and ice-floes. A dozen and one difficulties were always capable of arising to break down the regularity of the system.

Nor must it be imagined that the representative now spent all his time in his office and no longer came in contact with the regional and communal committees except as they came to the provincial center. At least once a month, generally on the second or third day of each month, he visited every region to "take the *existences*," that is, the stock inventory, carrying with him a large printed sheet, lined and ruled, on which each regional bookkeeper in turn entered the exact stocks remaining in his warehouse at the end of the preceding month. Each week or so a trip would be made to attend one or another of the regional meetings, generally in company with one or two of the chief members of the provincial committee, sometimes with a definite view in mind, a local difficulty or irregularity to be rectified, or a special message to be conveyed; more often simply with the general purpose of keeping in touch with the local committees more directly than through their delegates to the Comité Provincial, and of bringing them to realize more completely the scope

and exact nature of the vast organization of which these committees were only a local part. Then there were frequent trips other than those which included attendance at regular meetings of the local committees—trips on all sorts and descriptions of errands: a case of bacon or bag of rice reported to have arrived in bad shape, its true condition to be determined, and, if necessary, a report to be made to Brussels; a project for establishing a regular milk supply for a baby canteen or sick-children's committee, or a herd of cattle to be passed upon; the location of a native grain *dépôt* or new communal store to be decided upon; a flour mill to be inspected, more economical methods to be insisted upon, or the miller to be won over to a more generous contract; a yeast factory to be taken over under the management of the committee, or a new process for the manufacture of a coffee substitute or rice flour to be initiated and experimented with; an obstinate committee, which refused to instal the bakery control or accept prescribed rules of administration, to be brought to terms; a local laxity in the inspection or inefficiency in the transport system to be brought up to standard; a charge of maladministration in a communal committee to be disentangled, where village jealousy or differences in politics had possibly brought curé and burgomaster each to accuse the other of favoritism and unfairness and the entire local population had rallied to the support of one party or the other. Such were a few of the multifarious odd jobs which were constantly confronting the representative and demanding special trips through his province. It will readily be seen that his duties were by no means humdrum and monotonous, and that his motor was in small danger of rusting away from disuse. These were things which the early delegates necessarily had neither time nor occasion to do. Many such matters did not yet even exist, and the broader early methods did not call for any such attention to detail.

It must not be imagined, however, that the American representative was an expert in all and each of these many and varied matters, although he came to possess a large degree of experience on many technical subjects. On most of his trips upon such special missions he would be accompanied by the committee expert on the particular object in question; the head of the *département d'alimentation,* the State agriculturist, the head inspector, or an influential committeeman to smooth away personal difficulties, as the case might be, who often did most of the talking and permitted the representative to help the solution chiefly by the moral effect of his presence and accord. The representative's job was, in short, to keep the ball rolling. He should know all the departments of the provincial committee, be conversant with their methods, and, above all, be acquainted with their obstacles and shortcomings. As long as a branch of the work ran smoothly he would simply observe that branch. But when a hitch came, or something broke down, he must turn to and help put it in order again, and if possible in such order that that particular hitch would not occur again. He must watch the entire machine to anticipate difficulties before they arose, and to discover new and more improved methods if possible. He was in a sense not

responsible for any one of the departments, nor yet even for the *ensemble,* except in a limited measure, yet he kept a watchful eye on the entire machine, and performed in a way the services of what would be called in modern business an efficiency man.

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Inspection and control.— . . . . It was his duty, as stated above, to satisfy himself that all imported goods went to the civil population, that the guaranteed native products did the same, and that all goods in the control of the Commission and of the Belgian committees were distributed "equitably, and without waste, leakage, or individual favoritism." In a province of which the population would average between 500,000 and 1,000,000 inhabitants it was manifestly impossible for the chief representative, with his one or two American colleagues, to follow personally every gram of food and every meter of clothing from its arrival in the province to its final actual distribution. There must therefore be such a system of administration and control that any irregularity would immediately come to the American's attention. It was his duty first to organize a system which would insure this result, to insist that the measures and rules necessary to this end were put into action, and then to exercise such a supervision himself as to obtain the enforcement of the measures taken and the proper functioning of the system. The representative who strictly confined himself to the narrow limit of his actual responsibilities was still confronted with a broad field of activity.

This position of the representative will be perhaps still better understood when one considers the office side of his work, which was, in the later period, its more important feature. The American's office, in which worked his personal secretary and where were his own files and records, was generally a room apart in the same building as the various offices and bureaus of the provincial committee, occupied by the administrative heads and different departmental staffs, committeemen, and employees of that organization. In his office the representative received and examined a series of regular tabulated reports on all branches of the work: yield reports from the mills, chemical analyses of wheat, flour and bread samples, population censuses and corrections, and, most important of all, the reports of the bakery and *alimentation* inspectors. The Department of Inspection and Control[6] was very highly developed, with a central office for the entire country in Brussels, and a provincial chief and numerous staff in each province co-operating with the local representatives. There were two or more inspectors in each region, who visited each commune in their appointed territory at least twice a month, rendering a report on each visit, filled out on a tabulated form, and sent to the provincial center. These reports, after examination by the inspection staff, would come up to the representative accompanied by an appropriate letter to the communal committee in question, calling for the correction of irregularities noted, or suggesting possible improvements to be introduced, which, if approved, would be ultimately signed by the American and by a chief member

[6] See chapter ii, Documents 50 and 51.

of the Comité Provincial, and dispatched. These reports covered a broad field of questions, dealing with the communal committee in such a way as to indicate clearly all conditions of the local situation which had any bearing on the ravitaillement work. In addition to these general *alimentation* inspectors there was the more limited branch of the department which specialized in the bakery control. This branch had again its own inspectors, sub-chief, and system of reports, operating in much the same manner as the others. Then there were special reports on particular cases, intensified investigations of special phases of local work, which would be called for and treated as the case required, and there was the constant consideration of the entire system with a general view to possible alterations and ameliorations.

Reports to the Brussels office.—The provincial inspection looked in two directions: it controlled the ravitaillement work carried on in the province, and it sent up to the central Brussels office regular weekly reports on the different well-defined phases of the work, as well as special reports on particular subjects, as from time to time demanded. These reports to Brussels again took the form of letters, jointly signed by the American and a committee member, and it was the representative who was personally responsible for their being drawn up. In return the province from time to time received instructions and queries from Brussels, as well as occasional visits from executive chiefs or from the inspectors directly attached to the central office. It is here that the later close connection between Brussels and the provinces is best observed. That office would call for reports of a detailed nature on, for instance, the operation of the *Centrales*—organisms created by the German authority to undertake the distribution of those native food supplies which they refused to confide to the administration of the Comité National and its subcommittees—or with regard to a rumored exportation of native livestock. Or again, an exposition of local methods of panification and bread control would be requested with a view to gathering all possible data on the subject and deciding upon the best uniform and practical solution of the bakery problem.

An important phase of the inspection work was the attention paid to the legal side: the prosecution of cases of theft and fraud, misuse of ration cards, and illicit traffic in the imported merchandise generally. Such prosecutions were more often undertaken with a view to inspiring the population with a wholesome fear regarding such matters than with the definite intention of obtaining conviction in all cases. This entailed close co-operation between the provincial inspection and the local *procureur du roi,* and results were again regularly reported to Brussels. Another feature of the inspection was the so-called "Letters to the Ministers," weekly reports regarding irregularities on the part of the Germans, chiefly requisitions of native food supplies, which were forwarded through the diplomatic channel to the Brussels inspection department, which itself took the initiative in regard to the correction of all such matters.

Inventories and special investigations.—Besides the very important inspection work, the provincial representative sent to Brussels

periodic "wheat-situations"—statements of the exact grain and flour situation in the province, together with the estimated needs based upon supply on hand and the most recent census figures. Each month, after taking the *existences* in the regions, he must see that the results were properly totaled by the provincial statistical staff and duly forwarded to Brussels; also that further statements of receipts, distributions, and consumption were made out and furnished for the required date; and that a list of the persons supplied at the soup kitchens and different varieties of canteens was regularly rendered. These and other reports went to various destinations at Brussels, some to the Commission, others to the Comité National; they were made out partly by the American himself, partly by the Comité Provincial; but in all cases the representative was held responsible for their being duly furnished. There were "shipment receipts" to be filled out and forwarded for each lighter cargo or rail shipment received, showing net receipts, "shortages" or "overs," condition of goods, state of seals, demurrage, etc., and there were the skipper's bills of lading to be acquitted and the lighters turned about and sent back to Rotterdam for another load. There was a constant shipping correspondence with Brussels regarding dilatory tugs and strayed lighters, disputes with shipowners over demurrage and with underwriters on the subject of accidents and damages, as well as claims of the provincial committee against Rotterdam for shortages. Then there was a varied correspondence on a multitude of other subjects; such matters as, for instance, a skipper who had fraudulently acquired extra ration cards and was thus securing more than his legal share of food. The surplus cards had to be extracted from the skipper's possession—as he usually spoke nothing but Flemish, this was apt to add zest to the ordinary daily routine—and the result reported to the *Batelier* department at Brussels. Finally, there were a quantity of special reports, besides those of the inspection department, generally entailing a detailed investigation of some technical point, for which the capital was constantly asking the province. One week it would be on the *vicinaux*—the steam and electric narrow-gauge railways—requiring a map, designation of different lines and mileage, tonnage of each of various categories of goods transported, and number of passengers carried during each of the last six months, and the kinds and qualities of lubricants employed during the same periods; all this with a view to supplying the lubricants necessary for the transport of food directly by the Commission in view of the exhaustion of the ordinary commercial sources of such materials. Another week Brussels would ask for a complete list of all the horses needed for local transportation in each province, with ages and detailed specifications of each animal, together with those considered to be absolutely essential, and mileage covered per month by horse transportation; this because in a rash moment the military had suggested that they might guarantee such horses from requisition. Whenever work seemed to be a little slack in any departmental office at Brussels, the time would be devoted to a questionnaire until special reports and investigations became a mania, the brunt of which fell upon the provincial representative alone. No

early delegate would have dreamed of being called upon to show his experience, or his lack of it, as a veterinary or railway engineer.

Contacts with Brussels headquarters.—On the other hand, the centralization of many matters in Brussels tended to relieve the provincial member of the Commission of many of his former important duties. His dealings with the German authorities, for instance, became much more seldom, and in some cases almost rare. Ordinary matters of routine business were carried on by committee members or employees without the intervention of the American, and unusual negotiations were no longer within the competency of local officials, and had to be taken up with the *Vermittlungsstelle*[7] at Brussels. Passes were likewise only to be obtained through the Brussels *Passzentrale.* Again, if the representative went to Brussels with the idea that he could convince someone of the necessity of sending his province more food, he was almost surely destined to disappointment. He would be confronted with imposing tables of figures, based partly on the statistics that he himself had furnished, showing exactly what were the stocks available and those already sent his province, as a result of which it would invariably appear that either he was entitled to no more or else there was no more for the moment to be had. As for going to Holland, even had it been of avail, the happy days of easy passes had gone to come no more.

It will thus be seen that the early local emphasis on the provincial work had largely been supplanted in the later stage. In place of the intense provincial loyalty which certainly did not make for absolute equality, the representative felt that his first duty was toward the country as a whole, as represented by Brussels, and the broad uniformity called for by that office. Local pride among provincial representatives and a healthy rivalry, as well as a considerable degree of independence, still continued, however. The independence of regional and local committees had in large measure vanished—they were almost purely administrative, restricted to the observance and enforcement of the rules of the provincial committee. The provincial committee itself acted on principles clearly outlined by the Comité National, and in many cases enforced rules as handed down word for word by the latter organization. It was strictly held to the duty of accurate accounting, and to abstinence from methods which might make for inequitable preference. In all these matters the activities of Belgians and Americans, at Brussels as in the province, were inextricably fused and mingled. The two bodies were complementary: neither could have successfully carried on the work without the other.

Brussels conferences.—The close contact with Brussels necessitated regular visits to the capital on the part of the provincial representative. He always went for the Thursday meetings, that of the Comité National in the morning, and the Commission meeting in the afternoon, at which were present all provincial and Brussels departmental heads. In addition, every two weeks or so a general Com-

[7] A liaison department established by the German authorities to regularize the relations of the General Government and the C.R.B. and C.N. See chapter ii, Documents 44 and 45.

mission meeting was called, at which all members would be present, and a prepared paper generally read. The representatives usually arrived in their motors on Wednesday afternoon, and would dine together at the houses of different groups or at certain accepted restaurants. The next day was devoted to business and to the meetings, from which each man took the printed *ordre du jour,* with the various instructions given. The head representatives' meeting, presided over by the Director, was necessarily much less informal than that of the Comité National, and matters were freely discussed, situations in different provinces compared, questions asked, and suggestions made. Aside from this there was always more or less business to be done personally with one or another departmental head.

Provincial committee meetings.—The end of Thursday afternoon saw most of the provincial representatives gone back to their respective provinces, to attend and take active part in the meetings of their provincial committees, which generally occurred on the following day. Here the representative had the place of honor at the side of the president, and here he was ready to support the remarks of the latter or answer general questions and give instructions on subjects which appeared to be more purely in the domain of the Commission than of the Comité National. At times representatives were known to berate provincial assemblies soundly.

The remainder of the representative's time in the province would be spent in attending various subcommittees, such as the executive session of the chief provincial committee members, the soups committee, the *Séction agricole,* etc.; in conferences with departmental heads on different phases of the work; and in receiving the visits of all sorts and conditions of people who came on the miscellaneous and varied errands already referred to, as often as not having little or no connection with the ravitaillement.

Support of Belgian morale.—It is not necessary to enlarge upon the service rendered by the Commission for Relief in Belgium, even were it here in place. But one phase of the results which is perhaps most rarely considered may well be mentioned. Perhaps the greatest thing accomplished by the Americans in Belgium was not the bringing of food and clothing and the making possible of a well-organized system of charities without which the population would most surely have been practically annihilated by the worst horrors of suffering, want, and famine; but it was their contribution to the upbuilding of the Belgian morale from the condition of absolute prostration, in which it still was upon their arrival as a result of the terrible days of August 1914, to a point where the Belgian looked forward to the future with an absolute faith in the ultimate victory. Were it not that the material relief was absolutely essential to the life of the country, it might almost be said that this moral contribution meant more to the people than did the physical support.

This fact has already been intimated in referring to the effect upon the people of the delegate's first arrival, but it is impossible to emphasize it too much. The feeling that in the American the country had found a sympathetic friend, and a protector in time of trouble, was by no means confined to the masses. Its echo was the same

The Hague, Netherlands

November 11, 1914.

Mr. H. C. Hoover,

The Commission for Relief in Belgium,

8, London Wall Buildings,

London.

Dear Sir:

I am much obliged to you for your interesting letter of October 9th which is received here today. Captain Lucey has probably already informed you that I sent Captain Sunderland, Attaché of this Legation, with the shipment of food to Liège which left at four o'clock on Tuesday morning. Mr. Lucey called me up on the telephone quite late last night, to say that this shipment had been detained at the border by the failure of the German military authorities to furnish the locomotive which they had promised to draw the train to Liège. I told him to instruct Captain Sunderland to proceed at once to Brussels, demanding a military automobile for that purpose if necessary, and to inform Minister Whitlock of the state of affairs and urge the German military authorities to keep their promise, as I understand the situation in Liège is becoming very tense on account of the scarcity of food.

food.

I think that the organization of the Commission is as good as it can be made. The only thing necessary is to see to it that it moves strictly within the lines of its own work, and that nothing is diverted from the feeding of the civil population to military uses.

I think it will be possible to get some voluntary assistance for Captain Lucey if he wants it. I have sent him today the name of an American gentleman, living in Holland, who has volunteered. Another American, a very good one, will arrive from New York on the S. S. POTSDAM next week.

Unfortunately I have been obliged to ask for a brief leave of absence on account of serious injury to my eyes from overstrain. I hope and expect to be able to return to my work next month.

Very sincerely yours,

Henry van Dyke

American Minister.

Letter, 11 November 1914, van Dyke to Hoover

throughout all classes, and among those who understood fully the exact nature of the delegate's position and the inevitable limitations of his powers. The mere fact that they had by their side, for the time intimately associated with their lives, one who still possessed rights, who enjoyed certain privileges, was to them a comfort. They felt that whereas the American could not actually protect them, except in a few exceptional cases, his presence was a very real guarantee. The greatest service in this connection was of course rendered in the first months, when the moral dejection was the greatest, and it was the provincial delegate who, by his personal contact with the people both in his official and unofficial relations, did the most to revive hope and moral energy. Other circumstances naturally contributed to this result. Mighty steps were taken in this direction when relatively free circulation was permitted to the population within the occupied territory, when posts and railways again became available for private communication, when, as a result, there began to reappear commerce and industry on a small scale and necessarily very seriously limited by the absolute lack of imported stocks and of raw material, the destruction of many plants, and the great difficulty of transportation. The Belgian people possess a great deal of ingenuity and adaptability, and they showed it in this instance by making the best of the situation, and in developing, in view of the new and unusual requirements, as much commerce and industry as the conditions permitted. The material relief is necessarily very closely interwoven with this taking up again of what came for a time broadly and externally to approximate normal life.

Well before the exodus of the Americans from Belgium, even this small degree of commerce and industry had practically again disappeared, as a result of the deportations and the wholesale requisition of all materials and machinery. But the material relief had made the improved situation physically possible, in that it kept the people from starvation. Then it gave occupation and distraction to thousands of Belgians in the administration and carrying on of the work. The more influential and intelligent persons of each community were active members of the countless committees which sprang into being when the work began, and thousands of others were given employment in the offices or in the actual handling of the goods. These elements all contributed to the restoration of the Belgian morale. Those representatives who lived through the days of the deportations,[8] already alluded to, cannot ignore the meaning of their sympathy to those who felt the full brunt of the tragedy. Nor can those who were privileged to experience the last days of the Commission in Belgium and who took part in the farewells of the departure with all its sadness, deny that their presence had been of very deep and intimate import to those whom they had come to relieve, and this quite aside from the material succor which they had originally come to provide. Many fast friendships were, of course, made during the long period of constant and intimate relations which existed between Belgians and Americans, but the emotion

[8] See chapter x.

of the departure was not merely the expression of these personal friendships. It was far more: it was the echo of the feeling of a whole people who had appreciated the sympathy and taken strength from the moral support of the American delegate. It is this latter contribution which alone the provincial representative could partially appreciate, and which, all unknown to itself, was one of the greatest features of the work done by the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

It will be apparent that the American representative's position was one both unique and of intense interest. This was due, as much as anything, to the catholicity of his personal relation, which, whether it were in business or otherwise, comprised the entire population from the most influential of the country to the humblest, from the powerful *industriel* or wealthy landed proprietor to the salaried clerk or small agriculturist. Such was the situation that, despite his own youth and comparative inexperience in most cases, the representative stood on a basis of equality—and even rather more than that—with all. In this, as in many other aspects, the position of the representative was one of the most unusual that has ever existed, even as the Commission for Relief in Belgium is probably the most unique institution which the Great War has produced.

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2. *The American Delegate in Northern France*

DOCUMENT NO. 315

An account, by John Lowrey Simpson, *of the duties and activities of the C.R.B. district representatives in the North of France*

London, May 1917

When Glenn perched himself in a locomotive cab and conducted personally a trainload of flour into the North of France,[9] he opened the vistas of a new adventure for American youth. For this exploit was the precursor of the position of "French Delegate" or "North of France Representative," as it was variously called. And into the lives of the thirty men who filled these posts at one time or another streamed the full tragedy—shall we add comedy too?—of war and invasion, of occupation and of relief.

Paradox of a job! They were charged, these Representatives, to control the equitable distribution of foodstuffs, and to note the due observance of German guarantees in the occupied territory of Northern France. And Northern France differed as much from Belgium as Belgium itself differed from the great outside world beyond the lines of conquest and the frontiers of war. In Belgium there had been restored after the first few months some kind of social structure. There were central offices, ministers, civil authorities, negotiations, dinners—even tennis occasionally. There was nothing of this sort in Northern France; there was one dominating fact, insistent like tunnel

[9] The C.R.B. extended its operations to include the provisioning of invaded Northern France in April 1915. See chapter vi.

pressure against the ears: a state of war. In Belgium the Representative performed unusual and extraordinary duties, but in circumstances exhibiting sometimes a certain semblance of normality. With all the eccentricities of his position, he had a code of action—a variable code, to be sure—but still some sort of guide to his way of doing things. In Northern France there was no normality; there was no code of action; there was no "way of doing things." There was a state of war. The North of France Representative interpreted his duties as best he might, and performed them whether or no. He was the personal spokesman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium in the French territory. He had on the one hand his network of local French distributing agencies, and on the other the German Army of the Western Front. Ahead of him was the firing line, and off in the hazy background a "Brussels office." His own small group were the only neutrals amid two million Frenchmen and nobody knows how many hundred thousands of their German enemies. His general orders were: "Report that the people are eating the food."

Two million people in the army zone.—The actual condition of two million people living in direct contact with a hostile army in active operation is not easy to portray. The lines of the picture are likely to be too heavy or too light. New delegates in Belgium have conjured up to themselves astounding notions of Frenchmen, Germans, and Americans all scampering from cover to cover in the thick of flying shrapnel. Others, who have been in Belgium but not in Northern France, may tell you that it was all very much the same. Neither impression would be correct. I was a North of France Representative for six months; I never dodged shrapnel, though I am sure I should have tried to had I seen any coming toward me; yet often as I crossed the line of the *étape* from Belgium into Northern France there was always something portentous about it. People were shot for crossing that line when they did not hold the slip of white paper I possessed.

That was possibly the fascination for the American youth: it was forbidden territory. Once past the line you stood where the army was supreme. Inhabitants walked outside their communes by courtesy of special permission. Civilians rode on trains only with thrice-special passports. When one penetrated farther south one caught the grey sheen of moving troops; or one descried long supply trains—even occasional smoke of artillery fire. On fine nights there was the "line" to be detected by the distant flare of rockets and the dull glow of the guns. Yet always around and through everything else were the people. Here a village, and behind the hill a town. Soldiers out of number, of course, yet all so intermingled that at times one was at a loss to know whether there were people and some soldiers or soldiers and some people. It was the grim, attenuated tragedy of war which had settled down upon and enveloped a whole countryside. And withal, who shall say that it was tragedy pure and unalloyed? Surely not he who has seen a fat German soldier taking his ease in a sunny doorway and grinning broadly at a black-frocked gamin who strolled in his own composure whistling the *Marseillaise*.

The general character of the Representative's duties in these sur-

roundings necessarily lends itself less to precise statement than in the case of the American Representative in Belgium. Perhaps the French work always corresponded in a very rough manner to the earliest phase in Belgium. Certainly there is no possibility of contrasting sharply in France as in Belgium a "late" period against an "early" one. There was indeed a change in the nature of the French work, due to the Germans' appropriation bit by bit of some of the power at first exercised by the Americans. But this change was too gradual, too stubbornly contested by the Representatives, to admit of a sharp classification. It may be generally said without risk of error that the Representative in relation to the French agencies occupied a more authoritative position than did his Belgian colleague in his own corresponding capacity. This resulted inevitably from the isolation and comparatively unprotected position of the French committees. The American was the one bulwark between the French organization and the Germans. In these circumstances it was not remarkable that his suggestions carried great weight. On the other hand, the North of France Representative was distinctly more hampered and restricted in his movements and enterprises by the occupying authorities than the Representative in Belgium. This was due primarily to the more intensive military control of the French territory, and in the second instance to the German accompanying officer.

A German accompanying officer.—"The American and his German officer": this was not a mere relationship of two human beings—it was an institution. It was a composite of the Siamese twins, a Punch and Judy show, a parliamentary debate, and important quantities of high explosive. I have never been told, but I dare surmise that more than one C.R.B. Director has spent sleepless nights wondering what was happening in those far-off district centers, between the "American and his German officer." The situation was essentially and fundamentally—what shall we say?—peculiar. The American was sent into Northern France to watch the food. The German officer was sent to watch the American. Of course each had his other duties. The American Representative was charged not merely as custodian of the guarantees, but as an agent sent from Brussels to report upon the exact and special needs of his district. The German officer combined with his functions as detective extraordinary a considerable activity in facilitating the moving of foodstuffs and the planing of obstacles. Nevertheless, in the nature of things there existed at each district center a mutual observation bureau. The American and his German officer rode in the same automobile, visited the same communes, talked to the same Frenchmen, slept on the same floor, ate at the same table. It was like an interminable camping trip where two individuals, confined to each other's society, find added to the general limitations of that life the lurking suspicion that "the other fellow" is dipping secretly into the sugar stock. They may like each other, respect each other, desire the utmost good fortune—*but,* is he really making off with some of the sugar? The American called his officer his "nurse"; what the officer called the American is one of the secrets of the German Army into which we were never able to penetrate. It is a satisfaction to know, however, that in the face of their diver-

gencies of training, ideas, and sympathy, and despite the tension which was unavoidable in their companionship, these German officers and Americans did actually manage to persist month after month in their tasks. And the feeding went on. So that one can afford to be a little amused now at a relationship surely as strange as any since the day when "the animals marched in two by two, the elephant and the kangaroo."

French committees.—Glenn's feat with his trainload of flour and his personal sales to the mayors was not indicative of the turn events were to take in the North of France work. Indeed, so little in sympathy did the authorities appear to be with this procedure that a stipulation was placed in the agreement of April 14th, 1915[10] to the effect that:

"Delegates of the C.R.B. will not be allowed to accompany cars or trains in transit." However, this restriction worked little hardship other than from the standpoint of romance. Complete arrangements were soon made for handling regularly all foods. Among these arrangements one of the most important factors was the system of French distribution committees.

Almost all occupied France except certain narrow territories near the front received supplies through the Commission for Relief in Belgium. There was a general French committee for financial and distributing responsibility. This was the "Comité d'Alimentation du Nord de la France," or, as it was popularly called, the "Comité Français." It had its office in Brussels. But the French territory itself was divided into six districts: Lille, Valenciennes, St. Quentin, Vervins, Charleville, and Longwy. At the headquarters of each district was stationed an American Representative—and his German officer. It was also the general custom to have a French district committee at the same place. The districts were divided into regions or *syndicats,* with a local committee in each division. Finally, there were the communes and communal committees. In practice these French committees received, stored, and distributed the food. Shipments were billed from Brussels to the district committees. These made their allotments to the different regions or *syndicats* according to needs. The railroad was used this far, but the regions had ordinarily to arrange with the communes for the final carting of supplies to the population. Furthermore, the entire system of statistics, financial control, reports, inspection, and statements of needs, functioned through the committees. The communal committees reported to the regions, the regions to the district committees, and these last to Brussels.

In the name of France.—The splendid devotion of her citizens engaged in the feeding service will not be the least of France's glories in the present war. In these days there is so much superlative set down on paper that one hesitates to write in any but the barest terms. Heroism has been proved the common trait of all peoples; no nation holds a vested privilege in suffering. Why talk of the obvious? Yet at the risk of joining the roaring horde of hyperbole strewers, I must

[10] See chapter vi, Document 283.

express my admiration for the Frenchmen who bore the brunt of this work. If one considers the circumstances of the military occupation, the fact that every inhabitant has been marshaled almost as in a prison régime, the achievement begins to appear in its true proportions. Through all the space of that sad land Frenchmen have co-ordinated their efforts in a sustained enterprise the tediousness of which has been equaled only by its difficulty.

But the tediousness has been swallowed bravely enough, and the difficulties surpassed. And the food has gone to the people. How? Because in each city, each town, each hamlet, a little group of men —sometimes men and women—has hammered at the task day after day for more than two years. If you went to L—— I do not doubt but that you would still find M. E——, a senator of France, in his office at the *mairie*. The *mairie* has been turned into a *Kommandantur*, but for some reason the authorities left M. E—— his office. It is as though he had managed to preserve there, concealed somewhere about his great oil portraits and twinkling red grate, a bit of the real France—free France. In that office he has worked patiently through the interminable months. He is one reason why the food has gone to the people.

One day I was allowed to go to C——, a village only a mile or two behind the trenches. It was the "front line" of the feeding service. Not very much of a village, I must confess: a cluster of grey buildings half battered to pieces by heavy firing. There were bomb cellars here and there, because the place was used as a resting post by the army and was frequently shelled. But, little as was left in this war-swept hamlet to betoken the ordinary measure of human life, there was the local delegate. A rather slight man, I remember, and very nervous. Running to cellars to save your life on the edge of an instant does not conduce to a phlegmatic disposition. But he was there, shells or no shells, cellar or death, and he was doing his work in some sort of fashion. And the food was going to the people.

It was this French organization which the American Representative had as his greatest comfort in his own delicate task.

The German Army.—The other great organization with which the American was in touch was the German Army. I believe, however, that the American was much more keenly aware of the presence of the army than the army was of the presence of the American. One evening, after a long day of inspecting communes, my accompanying captain took me to dine at an officers' mess in a post close behind the front. The chaps were men just off the line, quite a different lot from the various functionaries and officials one comes in contact with thirty miles "inland" from the battle. One young lieutenant gazed at me across the shaky candle-light, and asked very courteously and in perfect English: "But what in the world are you doing here?" I explained something of the C.R.B. and of my own position. He listened with great attention, but said he had never heard of any such relief service. On the whole he took a friendly and curious interest in me, nudged me when it was time to respond to a toast, told me about his work, yet could not refrain from glancing at me now and then as though to say, "After all, my dear chap, it's deuced funny that you

should be here." He thought it rather decent of the German Army to give me an automobile to ride in, and hoped I would tell my friends when I went home that not all the Germans were "brutes." "America! You've never been neutral, you know . . . ," he snapped; and then added quickly, "You must pardon me; my brother was killed at my side a few weeks ago, and I am not quite myself."

The incident is a casual one, but represents in a manner the attitude of the army toward the American Representatives. Relations were not intimate. When we were remembered at all, our position was recognized. Personally we were treated with courtesy and consideration. In the society of the army our place was among the officers. English was spoken to us with the greatest goodwill by those who knew the language. Negatively, the army was bound by its agreements to allow the food to be distributed to the population without let or hindrance, and to permit the Representative to supervise and verify the distribution unmolested. Positively, it was necessary to look to the army for means of transportation; telephone, telegraph, and mail service; permits and passports for movements of local delegates, cartmen, book inspectors, etc.; the allotment of suitable office quarters and warehouse facilities for all the committees; and many other authorizations and dispensations.

The greater part of these business relations with the army, however, were maintained through the intermediary of the German accompanying officer.

The American and his German officer.—When the Commission for Relief in Belgium began pushing its enterprise into the North of France, the German accompanying officer came into being. He was part of the agreement finally concluded between the Commission and the German Army authorities. He was attached to the Representative as a safeguard against the difficulties which might be encountered by a stranger in the army zone, as adviser, as co-operator, and as a military precaution against any abuse of the Representative's privileges. As a matter of fact, it is in this last capacity that he lives most vividly in the memories and imaginations of most of the Representatives. The restrictions on the Americans which he was empowered to enforce were sweeping. One was forbidden so much as to converse with a Frenchman beyond the presence of the officer or some other military person designated by him. Joint quarters were taken by the officer and the American in each instance, and countless daily incidents tended to emphasize to the latter the sense of oppression and confinement. Furthermore, for reasons to which I shall refer presently, the position of the officer gradually strengthened itself at the expense of the American's.

It was perhaps this singular relationship with the German accompanying officer which more than anything else made the position of the American in France difficult to define. I have heard it rumored currently in our society at Brussels: "The director sends only the best men to France." On the other hand, there still echoes through our memories the supreme insult which was once uttered: "North of France delegates are about as important as so many mosquitoes." Of course the answer to the paradox is that the circumstances were

unique. Effort and accomplishment could not be gauged by ordinary standards. Before I went to Vervins an "old stager" took me aside to caution me. "It's very easy," he said. "Just get on with your German officer—that's all there is to it—get on with your German officer." He put the case too simply, no doubt; but it was true that to succeed we had to "get on." A holiday jaunt to Cologne or Wiesbaden was sniffed at by the Belgian Representatives. But those little friendly week-end trips with the officers helped mightily when there next arose a question of a German soldier being lodged too near a bakery.

A trip to Germany with his officer was a net asset to the Representative; and a munitions discussion may be counted as a disaster. No topic on earth seemed so pregnant of disagreeable possibilities as American shipments of munitions to the Allies. President Wilson was always hauled into the discussion by some hook or crook. While my companions were denouncing him as trying to precipitate war between Germany and the United States, I was usually trying to hide a grin. I could not but think of those at home who were criticizing the President's too-pacifist policy. However, our job was not to settle the munitions question, but to see that the French people ate the food. So we eschewed discussions so far as possible, and there are recorded but few retorts similar to that one, perhaps the most famous in C.R.B. folklore:

"Well, anyway, Captain So-and-so, we elected our President, and you had your Kaiser wished on you."

Some of the Germans were not so lacking in all sense of humor as the nation is reputed to be, and could appreciate the fine lights of this situation. An officer who was a guest at our house one evening remarked to me that I must find my position taxing, even very unpleasant, engaged as I was in a work on behalf of a population hostile to the occupying power, and surrounded as I was by the army's restrictions. "Get out!" exploded my officer. "He thinks he's very cute standing up against the German Army. He glories in it!"

Duties of the Representative.—Besides living on reasonably amicable terms with his accompanying officer, the American Representative had other duties. He was charged generally to assure himself: first, that no imported food was appropriated by the army; second, that an equitable distribution obtained throughout the district. His responsibility extended over an average population of more than 300,000 in an area some thirty to fifty miles square.

This necessitated the establishment of an American office in the district center for the handling of documents and correspondence. Usually one or two secretaries, either German soldiers or specially selected Frenchmen, assisted the Representative at his office. But this "bureau" is by no means to be confused with the hierarchy of French committees. It was entirely separate and apart, the personal headquarters of the American Representative. Through this office passed all communications between the higher French committees and Brussels. Sometimes the Representative required duplicates of important reports and documents, so that his own files might show a complete record of the relations between the committees and Brussels. Ship-

ment receipts passed through the Representative's hands; in some districts he countersigned them himself, in others merely signed an accompanying voucher. In order to be thoroughly aware of the exact condition of supplies from day to day, the Representatives sometimes received telegraphic announcements of arrivals of cars. Furthermore, as the official French reports of stocks, arrivals, distributions, etc., were made to Brussels only once a month, the Representatives in certain of the districts had special reports submitted to them by the French committees, three times a month, once a week, or even daily.

The extreme development of the Representative's personal office was not characteristic of all the districts. Sometimes the French district committee itself maintained such comprehensive files and compilations of statistics as to render it unnecessary to repeat the work. At other posts the German officer and his staff of assistants centralized all the important information, and since the Representative had access to these records he felt that sufficient. At my own station, Vervins, the division of the district into three (later two) subdistricts, and the absence of any central committee for the whole territory, made an unusual amount of office system necessary.

In all cases, however, the Representative sent out from his office circular and special letters to the French committees transmitting instructions from Brussels, with additional measures added at his own initiative to suit the special features of his district. He wrote calling attention to irregularities, authorizing changes when necessary, and occasionally responding to requests for information or for the settlement of local disputes on the part of the French committees. He furthermore used his office communication system to assemble statistics and information from the different parts of the district at the behest of the Commission for Relief in Belgium or the Comité Français in Brussels.

With the information at hand either in his own office or in that of one of his collaborators in the district center, and with the assistance of his secretary, the Representative prepared his own special reports which he rendered to the Commission's Brussels office. These supplemented the routine reports of the French committees to Brussels. The French reports covered all supplies in general. The Representative gave particular information, when required, on such subjects as clothing, stocks, and needs, the possibility of making up garments in the district, public health and vitality, disposition of empty cans and crates, variations in population, etc. He also reported personally each week on the exact amount of wheat and flour remaining in the district.

In some cases his duty was merely to make sure that the French committee rendered a report on an exceptional subject, such as shortage claims, accidents to supplies in course of shipment, or acknowledgments of indebtedness for food delivered. In other strictly financial relations, as insurance, the dealings were directly between the Comité Français and the district committees. The Representative simply took cognizance of such transactions.

Abroad in the district.—But the organization and direction of his office did not constitute the most important of the Representative's

functions. His personal trips or expeditions, his "field work" if you like, made up a far more interesting and valuable part of his duties.

In Belgium there was developed during 1916 a thoroughgoing system of Inspection and Control. By means of a large staff of Belgian inspectors the Comité National and Comission for Relief in Belgium were able to ascertain the manner of conducting affairs in every commune. No such scheme was possible in France. The much heavier restrictions of the army rendered out of the question the free circulation and easy communication necessary for that work. In some instances inspectors for small regions were allowed access to ten or fifteen communes. But there was no co-ordination or systematization of their work. Consequently the Representative was himself compelled to do an immense amount of traveling and inspecting. He and the German accompanying officer spent days on end touring the country in an automobile. They attended meetings of the district and subdistricts, visited the delegates of the *syndicats* and regions. The Representative discussed rulings and orders, delivered directly and personally the instructions of the Brussels offices, examined stocks and arrivals, advised as to storage, adjusted rations, settled questions arising between region and district. This personal contact with the French delegates of the middle order—those of the *syndicats* and regions—one may believe to have had a real value in maintaining the stability of the organization. In the district of Vervins there were some twenty-two (later twenty-five) regions. The Representative tried to visit each regional headquarters once a month. That meant that once a month every regional delegate had a chance to present his grievances, state his needs, ask his questions—in short, put himself in touch with the higher authorities of the relief service. He was by so much the less lost in the wilderness of German occupation.

However, the field work of the representative did not end with the regions. He pushed his investigations and inspections as often as possible into the communes themselves. This statement must naturally be given a reasonable interpretation. There were, on an average, 350 communes in a district. No Representative could score a very large percentage of inspections against that number. But it was possible to choose a village here and there—one in this region, another in that corner of the district—for examination. Thus an idea could be formed as to the way affairs were handled in various quarters. A normal inspection consisted in looking over the books, viewing the storehouse for the food, ascertaining the quality of the protection from the army, inquiring into the manner of distribution, noticing the arrangements for baking, the quality of the bread, etc.

Charleville and Brussels.—What knitted together all the other powers and duties of the American Representative was his close touch with Charleville and Brussels. Charleville, the headquarters of the German officials associated with the feeding service, was also for a time the residence of a Chief Representative for the North of France. With him the local Representatives were able to communicate for information and advice. Occasionally he visited the different district headquarters, and on rare occasions the American Representatives were called to Charleville. However, these relationships

were still altogether in the army zone; hence there was always a certain lack of ease and freedom. In May 1916 there ceased to be a Chief Representative for the North of France.

The weekly meeting at Brussels was really the strength of the Representative's position. These meetings were held every Saturday morning, and all Representatives were allowed by the army authorities to attend, except in cases where traveling was "undesirable for reasons of a military character." In practice Representatives were only occasionally detained. The Director of the Commission presided at these meetings, and gave full information regarding supplies, negotiations, policies, dangers, reports, and so many other things that if I enumerated them I should be re-writing the minutes of the last two years. Each Representative was given an opportunity to present his particular problems and questions. Discussion was free, decision finally taken by the Director after hearing all views, and instructions issued. Ordinarily the Representatives reached Brussels, every one with a dozen questions, inquiries, "points" of all kinds, about the work. After the meeting each had a new collection of notes to remind him of his answers and instructions for the coming week.

It is worth adding that the weekly meetings at Brussels saved the situation in more than one respect. In most of the districts the strain told appreciably upon those who occupied posts. The Commission did not ordinarily keep a man in the North of France more than six months at a time. Naturally, the effect of the sojourn depended upon both the particular district and the temperament of the individual. But in almost every case traces of the tension were noticeable. Some men who have been among the best of the Belgian Representatives have been quite unable to remain in the North of France. Against the sultriness and irksomeness of that life the weekly trip to Brussels was literally a godsend. It meant freedom for a day or two, fellow-countrymen, unrestrained intercourse, the sense of being still a human entity. The Brussels meetings probably doubled the period of usefulness of the aggregate of North of France Representatives.

The rôle of the German officer.—It has been stated that the greater part of the Representative's relations with the army was through the intermediary of the accompanying officer. The importance of this fact should not be passed over lightly. One is perhaps a little too inclined to remember these officers' arrogant usurpation of power in the feeding work, and to forget that they did actually render some extremely valuable services. They dealt with railway officials and with local *Kommandants*. They arranged to have storehouses and offices put at the disposition of the committees. They ousted soldiers from the bakeries, demanded the passports which made district meetings possible, sent telegrams far and wide, escorted Representatives into villages well within the zone of artillery fire. They were the buffers between the American and French organizations on the one hand and the German Army on the other. I well remember the evening when Captain —— rescued me from the clutches of a decrepit *Landsturmer* who was marching me off with fixed bayonet to a fate I dare not divine. On the other hand, the officers' control of communications gave them a considerable power over the Repre-

sentatives. The former had the right to censor all incoming and outgoing mails, not only between the Representatives and Brussels, but within the district. This could give rise to most heated differences, particularly when the power to censor was used to dictate the substance of instructions to local French delegates. Furthermore, by an interpretation of "military requirements" a show of justification was made out for all sorts of interferences in the functioning of the service.

It was not always thus in the North of France. Reference has already been made to the gradual strengthening of the officer's position at the expense of the American's. The fact is that at the beginning of the work the officer was really an "accompanying officer," and was so styled in German: *Begleitoffizier.* But as time wore on the personnel of the Americans changed. New men, unfamiliar with the work, came to relieve those who had engaged in its creation. It was found necessary to abandon the original custom of having two Representatives at a post; after that in each district one American had to wage his battle alone. The officers remained. Naturally they gained all the advantage of an "old hand" over a "green" one. Unfortunately it was impossible to find Americans who could devote indefinite stretches of time to the task, and man after man had to be replaced. With every replacement the accompanying officer edged his advantage a little farther. He was charged with certain duties on behalf of the German Army in regard to the distribution of native foods. Then he was no longer called officially an accompanying officer, but a *Verpflegungsoffizier,* an "officer dealing with matters of feeding." In the meantime the American Representatives were disputing inch by inch this aggression into their province. "It is trench warfare," someone once told us, "and you are losing, and you will lose. Only, you must lose as slowly as possible." So we lost as slowly as possible. And the people kept eating the food.

But sometimes a veritable crisis precipitated itself ere one could catch his breath. I had such an experience before I had been in the North of France three weeks. The trouble arose over adding some new communes to the district, and my instructions to visit them and to report to Brussels before sending any food there. The Germans refused to allow me to enter the communes ahead of the food. It was really not a matter of stupendous importance, and was finally compromised by having, first, a meeting of communal delegates from the territory in question but at a point already in the service, then the first shipments, then my tour of inspection. But before we arrived at that arrangement my officer had completely lost himself in rage, I had had to go to Charleville to interview the higher powers, and there had been a special meeting of officials at Vervins. Such were not daily occurrences in the North of France, fortunately, but from time to time life was embellished with that sort of incident. The Representative had usually to rely on the resources of his own judgment at those moments. On the one hand, the maintenance of the guarantees and protective provisions; on the other, the undesirability of an open break with the Germans. It was for the Representative to hit somehow a middle course. The food had to go to the people.

Six districts.—In the Brussels office the big green boards speckled with black and white figures showed supplies going into six districts in the North of France. They were Lille, Valenciennes, St. Quentin, Vervins, Charleville, and Longwy.

Lille District included the territory farthest north, and contained the great industrial centers of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing. Valenciennes lay just southeast, between the Western Front and the Belgian border. This was a region of coal-fields, an extension of the Mons belt. The Representatives for the two districts lived together with their officers at Valenciennes during the greater part of the work. Later the Lille Representative and his officer moved to Tournai in Belgium. But both Representatives dealt with much the same sort of problem: thickly massed industrial and urban populations, comparatively little agriculture, acute distress. At Lille the want was greatest, and the difficulties of the Representative's task were complicated by the fact that he could visit the city of Lille and his chief committee only twice a week. On the other hand, in these districts the business training which accompanies industry gave a high degree of efficiency to the committees.

Next to Valenciennes came St. Quentin, named after the city. Two officers were ordinarily stationed there with the American. The French committee was strong, under the guidance of the mayor of St. Quentin. Altogether the co-operation among the French, German, and American forces was probably more practicable and better in this district than in any of the others.

At Vervins, the district in which my own experience was had, a system of extreme decentralization prevailed. The country was almost entirely agricultural, and the population scattered among a few small cities and innumerable towns and villages. It seemed impossible to effect one organization for the whole district, so three subdistricts were formed. Later two of these were combined. There were thus two or three chief committees instead of one, and none of them had its headquarters with the Representative at Vervins. This meant a considerable amount of office work for the Representative. But finally that was systematized and given largely into the custody of a very capable French secretary. Two or three German underofficers or private soldiers acted as secretaries to the captain attached to the post, and these assisted in the routine work of telegrams, correspondence, etc. Toward the middle of 1916 a lieutenant was added to the German staff.

Charleville[11] was in some respects the most difficult of all posts. The Representative resided, not only with the German officer responsible for the district, but with the officer in general charge for the North of France. Charleville always seemed fairly bristling with "military exigencies," and the Representative found himself hedged about by an unusual number of absurd restrictions. An active, intelligent French committee redeemed the situation in some measure, but

[11] Charleville was for a long period the headquarters of the German General Staff. It was also the station of the Commission's chief representative for Northern France.

it took all the skill and tact which one individual could well muster to cope with the problem. Even here, however, the Representatives could usually assure themselves as to the proper conduct of the service.

Longwy was a straggling district, half agricultural, half industrial. The two German officers were genial spirits; life for the Representative usually ran rather smoothly. There was little office detail and considerable personal touch with local French committees. The most picturesque feature of the work here was the bi-monthly trip into an isolated portion of the district in the Vosges.

A day on the road.—A day on the road in the North of France: it used to be such a casual, how-do-y'-do sort of thing, and already it is tinged with the rambling half-light of bygone romance. . . . .

At some chill morning hour you clambered into the car and plumped down beside your officer. The fat chauffeur trod gingerly around and about his engine. He knew that if it did not start promptly he would be cursed with great German curses. An indefinite number of orderlies and secretaries pottered here and there with rugs and leather bags and things. At last you were off. The secretaries and orderlies froze into indescribable salutes. The car swept through the village and out on the long, thin road, as though determined to fly straight at the trenches, and over them, and to draw up for lunch in Paris.

Too fast and too cold for much talking, so you set about watching for the spire of M—— to appear over the hill-line.

At M—— there was a subdistrict meeting, some fifteen regional delegates gathered to discuss their problems and to receive instructions from the French chief delegate. You and your officer clattered in. Everyone rose. You shook hands with the chief delegate and those nearest, and then sat down at his right. The American was always seated at the right of the chief delegate. It was for the French a way of expressing something they couldn't well say. Did "Monsieur le Délégué Américain" have announcements? Yes, he did—so you pulled your French together with both hands and talked about the necessity of moving stocks of condensed milk to the regions having the fewest cows, and insisted that all empty cans be smashed, and asked where the greatest need for clothing was. . . . . Then the officer entered into an interminable discussion of accounts, and everyone nodded, and finally you clattered out as you had come.

On the way to T——, another subdistrict center, you stopped off at C——, whence had issued echoes of untoward happenings. Yes, you found it very bad; an inhabitant in charge of distributions had been establishing a private cache of food. Your German officer had a spasm of righteous indignation. He became lobster-red; and his voice soared high and then broke, like a rocket. Had he been proportionately as incensed at Germany seizing the North of France one shudders to reflect upon what might have happened to him. The mayor was called in, and the *Kommandant,* and the man who had taken the food was removed from his position and replaced. Then you pushed on to T——.

At T—— there was no meeting, but you discussed matters with the chief delegate, explained a letter he had received from Brussels, and had a look at some soap just arrived. A bookkeeper remarked surreptitiously that he was convinced the war would be over within three months. Poor chaps! they had been saying that for two years. But you had little time to spend at the office, for your captain hustled you off to lunch with the *Kommandant* of T——. They were great friends, your officer and this *Kommandant,* both from the same city in Germany. So you had a good lunch, and toasts all around; everyone was most agreeable to you; you and the *Kommandant* resorted to French as a means of communication, and vied with each other as to who could speak it the more atrociously.

After luncheon your officer left to call upon some other friend, and found a young lieutenant to "take care" of you. With this substitute twin you looked in upon several communes in the vicinity, thumbed over account books, solemnly smelled loaves of bread, and cocked an eye to the protection signs and the security of the lock on the bakery door. After two hours of that business you picked up your officer, and found he had planned to take afternoon coffee at L——. You preferred to examine some more communes, but "anything for peace in the family." So you went and drank eight cups of coffee, smoked seventeen cigarettes, listened to German for an hour and a half, understood nothing of it, yawned, silently cursed the day you were born—and when all hope was vanishing your officer announced that it was time to go.

On the way home you persuaded him to stop at one more commune for an inspection. Things were perfectly arranged there, so you felt better. Then the car scudded along, mile upon mile, under a frosty wintry moon. The villages began to loom as great splotches when they slipped into view and passed. As though they had quite bundled themselves up in the night and the cold and the moonlight.

Questions of power.—It must be clear that the North of France Representative had the reins less securely in his hands than the Americans in Belgium. The spirit of the French organization was splendid, and the committees and delegates were eager to receive advice and suggestions from the American. They felt that he was their bulwark. Furthermore, the particular sorrow of the situation in France gave a special zest and enthusiasm to the work of the Representatives there. Yet the practical difficulties were great. The Representative faced the same obstacle which beset the path of the French—a lack of freedom.

It was therefore a problem of personal ingenuity. Friendly relations had to be maintained in all quarters, German and French alike. Accomplishment had to be by suggestion and discussion with as few "ultimata" as possible. Great care had to be taken not to exhibit too keen a sympathy for the French; on the other hand, it would have been easy to offend the French by an apparent alignment on the side of the Germans. A solution could only be attained by announcing flatly that one's sole consideration was the proper continuance of the work. It was impossible to enter into any other disputes or

claims. Were the guaranties being maintained? Was the distribution equitable? Did the people receive the food? Those questions, and those only, concerned the Representative.

For all that, the moral effect was not entirely lacking. Though he might not openly champion their cause, the American was there with the French. He was a friend, obviously, or he would not have come. I am sure the French realized that. I am sure that, quite apart from material considerations, they were glad because of the presence of these young Representatives. And despite all the delicacy of the situation, things could be done sometimes. Those of us who attended a meeting of Germans and Americans at Charleville one memorable day will not forget the discussion of the deportations from Lille.[12] Those deportations were checked shortly after that meeting.

In his own proper sphere the accomplishment of the Representative was probably less satisfactory to himself than to anyone else. The fact stands that the guarantees have been generally maintained and the people have been fed. After all, that is what Mr. Hoover and his colleagues set out to achieve. The test of the success or failure of such an undertaking does not hang upon the question of whether an American Representative has commanded or cajoled a German officer. I recall that I once visited with my captain a commune where soldiers were sleeping in a room opening on the committee's flour storehouse. I was still new to the work. "This must of course be changed," I observed. "Nothing of the sort," retorted the captain. "Your business is to see that no food is taken by the army. You have no proof that that has occurred here. I deny that you have the right to demand a change." I finally closed a fruitless argument by stating that I intended to report the matter to Brussels. "Very well," snorted the officer. In the afternoon we passed by the place again. The officer absented himself for a few moments, and on returning announced: "On my own initiative I have ordered new arrangements made here. We shall examine them when next we pass in this vicinity. But you understand that it is I who have done this, that I deny absolutely your right to insist."

I grunted, and, still outraged, I privately recounted the whole incident to my Director at Brussels the following Saturday. "If such a principle is admitted," I protested, "the power of the Representative . . . ."

"The power of the Representative!" The director smiled.

"By the way, Simpson," he added, "I believe you said that Captain —— ordered the place to be put in shape, didn't you?"

"Yes, he did."

"Well, I guess that's what you wanted, wasn't it?" remarked the Director. And I am sure that his eye twinkled.

The front line of relief.—One fine evening in late spring we stopped, the inevitable German officer and I, at a little commune a few rifle shots behind the front. A wrinkled old woman and a bent old man came out of a house to scrutinize us.

"Good evening," I ventured (the officer was in decent humor);

[12] This meeting is described in chapter x, Document 433.

"you don't know me, but I am the American Representative. I am here with the food."

"Really?" exclaimed the venerable person, in wonderment. "He's the American," she informed her husband knowingly. They both looked at me, and smiled. They were too full of years to be overwhelmed by even so strange a thing as "the American."

"They're fighting up there," the old woman remarked just then. I glanced about. Over the dingy grey houses of the village the glow of a fading day still streaked across the sky. Some clouds straggled not far above the horizon, but below them one could make out a few black specks. Each speck gradually expanded, the while it grew dimmer. Of course that meant that near the trenches someone was firing at an aëroplane.

The ancient lady shielded her eyes with her hand and watched the scene. She was still smiling a little, as though to say:

"My word! Americans here, and people always shooting at one another. It's extraordinary how folk act."

I watched her as she watched the specks, which were always appearing and then growing larger and fainter.

I thought of the Commission's New York office, where clerks were scurrying about, and telephones whirring, and people were buying grain by the thousands of tons. Then there was London, with its shipping questions, and negotiations, and finance. I knew the London office too. And I had seen the harbor at Rotterdam, and the grain being sucked out of ships into lighters for Belgium. At Antwerp men were working to transfer some of this grain into smaller lighters for the North of France. At Brussels somebody was forever shifting the little black and white figures on a green board headed "Lille," or "Vervins," or something like that. And back in the town of Vervins itself my secretary was sorting telegrams in his own fashion.

But this old lady and old man standing in the sunset were different. They were what it all meant. New York was a long way off, and over on the horizon shrapnel clouds were floating. An old lady and an old man peering at shrapnel clouds. "And the people were eating the food."

That was really the front line of relief.

Chapter VIII

HARVESTS[1]

The first relief measures and the initial diplomatic guarantees were based upon the assumption that the emergency was a temporary one. On the 16th October 1914 the Germans guaranteed[2] imported relief supplies free from requisition and on the 20th October the British Foreign Office announced[3] that they were not stopping importations for the Belgian civilian population. The door was thus opened for emergency relief, but none of the belligerent governments appreciated the immensity of the problem or the extensive financial and diplomatic arrangements that it involved. It is interesting to recall, however, that Hoover, as his memorandum on the 20th October 1914[4] to Ambassador Page shows, perceived that the situation demanded a very considerable extension of the measures then taken. He wrote: "The organization and solution of the problem necessitates: (*a*) The expansion of undertakings by the military authorities not to requisition foodstuffs imported . . . . and further to cease the requisitions of native foods . . . . (*b*) The permit of the English authorities, conditional upon importing foodstuffs in neutral ships . . . . needs extension . . . . (*d*) . . . . It is absolutely necessary to secure positive subvention from the Allied Governments. . . ." Thus before the Commission was organized and days before the first emergency supplies were moving, Hoover in this document emphasized the three issues, viz., money, ships, and the protection from requisition of indigenous produce. The third of these issues, which is the subject of this chapter, was as vital to Belgian relief as the other two.

Money, in large amounts, and ships were clearly necessary in order to purchase and deliver the great quantities of

[1] For a brief statement of the normal local food resources of Belgium and Northern France, see Gay, *Statistics*, pp. 18–27.

[2] See Document 7, chapter i. This letter, as well as many other German guarantees and declarations, is repeated in the original language in chapter xvii.

[3] See Document 12, chapter i.

[4] See Document 13, chapter i.

food required; but obviously the Allies would never consent to the import of food if it were to constitute a replacement of the native supplies requisitioned by the German Army. Moreover, justice in distribution would not be assured unless both the imports and the harvests were controlled by the relief organization.

In theory the importations of the Commission were to furnish a supplement to local products sufficient to provide the people of the occupied regions with a ration adequate to maintain them in health. On the basis of this theory the Allies ultimately held that the whole relief enterprise was predicated on an agreement by the Germans to abstain from local requisitions and to reserve for the Belgian and French people the whole fruit of their harvests; otherwise the relief imports would be indirect but none the less valuable aid to the German armies. The British raised this issue at once when Hoover in the winter of 1914–15 began to ask for relaxation of shipping restrictions and subsidies[5] in order to put relief on the substantial basis that the situation demanded.

The protection of the local harvest had an important bearing also on another phase of the Commission's work—the determination of its programs of importation, which were to cover the deficit between the amount of local food available and the minimum required to sustain the population "without immediate and serious physical deterioration."[6] Of the two factors which determined the theoretical program of importations the minimum ration requirement was constant or relatively so. It was calculated on the number of people to be fed, the calorie requirement per person per day and the calorie production of the food commodities available locally or by importation.[7] The second factor, local produce, varied from year to year. The principal causes of these variations were, in the beginning, disorganization, destruction, and confiscation during the first months of the war; and, later, lack of man power, lack of fertilizers,

[5] See chapter iv (Subsidies) and chapter v (Ships).

[6] Document 99 in chapter iii is an example of the monthly ration tables worked out by the C.R.B. on this basis.

[7] The dietetic aspect of the ration is outside the scope of this book. It is discussed in *Calorie Production and C.R.B. Analyses of the Common Foods* and *Food Values and the Rationing of a Country* by Robinson Smith.

and, in 1917–18, the decrease in the rural area of France under enemy control because of the German retreat in the autumn of 1916 and the spring of 1917.

Although the Commission imported bread grains greatly in excess of the amount locally produced, it was never able consistently to maintain the theoretical program. This was not due to want of effort but to external factors over which the Commission had no control. Foregoing chapters have shown how some of these factors—the lack of funds, the shortage of ships, the arbitrary restrictions of the British Foreign Office, the U-boats, and the world shortage of food—affected the program. Despite these difficulties, the Commission was able to approximate the ideal program closely enough to achieve the purpose of its existence—to save the population of the occupied regions from famine or serious physical deterioration from undernourishment.

As has been noted in chapter vi, the occupied territories of Belgium and Northern France were divided for German administrative purposes into the Occupation and Army Zones, the one under a civil and the other a military government. This division had an important bearing on the problem of native produce. With respect to the Occupation Zone negotiations were carried on in a large measure through diplomatic channels, and the details of control were worked out in conjunction with the Comité National and German civilian officials. But in the Army Zones the situation was more delicate and complicated, for the German forces had a hand in producing the crops. Here the Commission dealt directly and exclusively with the military authorities in regard to both the protection and distribution of the local crops. Because of this administrative distinction, the documents of this chapter are divided into two groups. Part I relates to the Occupation Zone, Part II to the Army Zones.

PART I. THE OCCUPATION ZONE

1. *The Belgian Harvest of 1914. November 1914–March 1915*

With the assurance of the Governor-General of the Occupation Zone that imported supplies would not be requisitioned, the relief committee had secured the limited acquiescence of the British Foreign Office to importations.

Unquestionably no general opening of the blockade for relief purposes was conceived by the British. This situation became evident when Hoover on the 5th November[8] appealed to Sir Edward Grey for British Government recognition and financial support. Sir Edward made it clear that the continued requisition of native food by the Germans made it impossible for the British to contribute support. Hoover replied that he would endeavor to persuade the German Government to discontinue these requisitions, and he was assured that success in this would certainly influence the British Government.

Hoover's first step was to inform Minister Whitlock of the British attitude and request him to approach the Governor-General. The following document is particularly interesting as it indicates the eagerness of Baron von der Goltz to see the relief work put on a permanent basis.

DOCUMENT NO. 316

Letter, VON DER GOLTZ TO WHITLOCK, *declaring that imported relief supplies will be devoted exclusively to the civil population and that the army will discontinue requisitions of local produce*

BRUSSELS, 14 November 1914

His Excellency, The Honorable Brand Whitlock, Brussels

EXCELLENCY:

The Comité de Secours et d'Alimentation de Bruxelles, established under the patronage of Your Excellency and of His Excellency, the Spanish Minister, has brought to my attention the question of feeding the civil population of Belgium. I am informed that the Committee has decided so to extend its scope as to provide so far as possible for feeding and clothing the civil population of the whole of Belgium.

As Your Excellency knows, Belgium in ordinary time of peace produces only about one-sixth of the amount of flour necessary for its maintenance. Under existing circumstances, with practically no work being done in the country, with crops abandoned and with imports stopped, Your Excellency will realize that the question of feeding the civil population has become extremely serious.

The Committee informs me that it has purchased a large consignment of foodstuffs in England and that the necessary permission having been granted by His Britannic Majesty's Government, this consignment is now being brought to Brussels by way of Holland. The

[8] See Document 117, chapter iv.

military authorities here have given positive assurances in writing that these supplies shall be devoted exclusively to the feeding of the civil population. While this consignment of supplies relieves the situation, the relief is, of course, only temporary, and in the interest of all concerned an effort must be made to effect some permanent arrangement whereby foodstuffs purchased abroad may be brought into Belgium upon the distinct understanding that they shall be devoted exclusively to the use of the civil population.

The Comité de Secours et d'Alimentation informs me that it is prepared to collect the necessary funds and to purchase abroad such foodstuffs, clothing, and supplies as may be necessary. The Imperial Government is prepared to offer the most formal assurances that any supplies so purchased will be scrupulously respected by the German military and civil authorities and will be exempt from seizure and requisition. The possession, control, and disposition of all these supplies will be left entirely in the hands of the Committee or its designated agents. It is hoped that in view of the acute situation in Belgium and the assurances which I have the honor to communicate to Your Excellency, His Britannic Majesty's Government will be prepared to permit the free importation into Belgium from England or other countries of such supplies as may from time to time be purchased by the Committee under Your Excellency's patronage.

When informed that His Britannic Majesty's Government is prepared to agree to such an arrangement the Imperial German Government will not only order that the supplies imported for the civil population be respected, but will, further, stop all requisitions for foodstuffs in Belgium. Thus the total amount of foodstuffs which Belgium is able to produce will be left to meet the needs of the civil population.

I have ventured to offer to Your Excellency the foregoing assurances on behalf of the Imperial Government, not only because of the fact that Your Excellency is charged with the protection of German interests in Belgium, but also because I feel that in view of the disinterested and neutral position of the United States no promise could have a more solemn and binding character for Germany than when offered to a representative of the United States Government.

I venture, therefore, to appeal to Your Excellency to bring the foregoing considerations to the attention of His Britannic Majesty's Government and to use your good offices to assure the acceptance of an arrangement such as I have suggested.

While expressing my appreciation of Your Excellency's humanitarian efforts on behalf of German subjects and others in Belgium, I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my highest consideration.

(Signed) VON DER GOLTZ

[*Translation*]

The above assurances of the Governor-General were of great value but were not sufficient. Hoover decided, there-

fore, to attempt, through Ambassador Gerard, to secure confirmation of von der Goltz' policy from the Imperial authorities in Berlin. Such confirmation would strengthen the Commission's position in Belgium and carry greater weight than military guarantees in the pending negotiations with the British.

DOCUMENT NO. 317

Letter, HOOVER TO GERARD, *concerning German requisitions in Belgium, the British attitude, and the protection of belligerent vessels carrying foodstuffs*

LONDON, 5 December 1914

His Excellency James Gerard,
American Ambassador, Berlin

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I take this opportunity of laying before you a matter of great importance and one which threatens to involve the well-being of millions of people.

As you are well aware, as one of the Honorary Chairmen of this Commission, we are making a stupendous effort to justify our countrymen, not only in efficiency and skill, but in broad dealing and humanity, in a task which has been put up to us.

In order to carry this out successfully, we have necessarily to receive the support of both the German and English Governments. We fully understand the German view regarding the population of Belgium: that they, having been dependent for many years for their food supply upon imports and having considerable resources still within the country, should be able to provision themselves, were it not for the wall which has been built around them by the British Navy. On the other hand, the English view is practically that the introduction of foodstuffs into Belgium is furnishing succor to a besieged populace and that any foodstuffs that we bring them relax to that extent the strain which would otherwise fall upon the German people. Between these two clashing mill stones there is daily danger that the whole seven millions of the civil population of Belgium may be reduced, not only to starvation but, through the outbreak of violence, to at least partial massacre.

In the initial stages, the attitude of the English Government was friendly and we were even allowed to purchase a certain amount of foodstuffs in England for transmission to Belgium. Our ships were assisted by the British Admiralty and generally the British Government was helpful to a great degree. This whole attitude has, however, changed during the last week and we are now confronted with an attitude on the part of this Government which threatens to

overthrow the whole of our efforts. I enclose herewith an order[9] which has been sent out by the British Admiralty to all British shipowners, and as seventy per cent of the foodstuffs which we are bringing to Belgium is in British bottoms, this practically means a cessation of our supply unless we can get some relaxation. We are bringing every pressure to bear that we can devise, direct and indirect, to get this remedied, but the firm attitude of the British Government at the present moment appears to be that the large scale operations which we are carrying on defeat the military objects in the relaxation of pressure upon the Germans. It is not that the Germans take the food which we import into Belgium, as we have been able to demonstrate the most scrupulous adherence on their part to the undertakings which they have given to us, but the general feeling on the part of the British that this in the main assists the enemy.

The reason for this change of front has been the recurrent requisitioning of native foodstuffs by the Germans and that, where we import one ton of foodstuffs, they make a requisition for a ton of the foodstuffs which, although it may come from the residues of supplies still in the country, simply means that by continuous requisitions on their part the Germans will secure the substitution of our foodstuffs for all of that which is now in the country. The British Government say that this indirectly amounts to our feeding the German Army.

I know it is a delicate point for us to approach, but it must be vital to the Germans that we should continue this work, and if they could only view the matter from an enlightened position, I feel sure that the good feeling of the German people would cause them to order a complete cessation of local requisitions.

The general indemnities which may be demanded from the Belgian people, to be collected at large from the country, is not a matter upon which we can offer any comment, but it seems to us that if their attitude toward the Belgian people were confined to a general scheme of monthly indemnities such as they threaten, instead of local communal requisitions and fines of money, it would overcome the most difficult problem with which we are faced. In other words, if the Germans take money out of Belgium it may indirectly cause great hardship, but it does not starve the Belgians because the whole problem of feeding the Belgians is the actual material foodstuff required, which we propose to introduce into the country in sufficient amounts to supplement the stores which are already there.

I know that this is a delicate thing for me to suggest, and an even more delicate thing for you to take up, but the impending fate of these seven millions of people surely warrants us in any endeavor which will alleviate their position.

We have now made a fairly complete canvass of the situation in Belgium and we can assure you that there is not, even in the best provided towns, more than two or three weeks' of bread supply. Numbers of localities have been exhausted for some time and the

[9] Document 189, chapter v.

people reduced entirely to a vegetable diet. There are between one and a fourth and one and a half millions of people being supported by the Communal Kitchens, and there are another two or three millions whose only bread supply is that which we can furnish through the market. This position is getting steadily worse, until within the next sixty days absolutely the only food supply for this whole population will be that which we can import.

I took the liberty a few days ago while in Rotterdam, of telegraphing[10] to you with regard to the possibility of the German Government itself making some subscription to our funds. We require about 20,000,000 marks per month in order to provision this population, and it struck me that of all the opportunities which have yet been presented for the Germans to put themselves in the best form before the American people this was the most excellent, and that if they have the vision to take up the broad attitude that the poor of Belgium are the wards of all of the Powers, and that the Germans are prepared to contribute their quota to their support, it would go a long way to break down the mass of criticism directed against them in America for their treatment of the Belgians. All of the destruction in Belgium and the levying of food supplies for the support of troops can be defended as a war measure, but to allow these people to starve while under their material control will raise a storm in the neutral world fifty times the volume of that which has already been created by any local destruction. It is my belief that the belligerent nation which refuses to participate in the succor of these people will yet have to carry the brand of Cain as their murderers. On the other hand, any kindness held out to them in this time of dire necessity will bring with itself credit which in after history will wipe out nine-tenths of the charges of ruthlessness in war.

For your information I send you herewith the charts showing the material which we had in motion at the beginning of this week. Our position is considerably further improved today.

One other subject before I close, and that is the question of the protection of belligerent vessels carrying our foodstuffs into Rotterdam. We are using your dispatch to encourage British owners to go to Holland but they immediately reply that there is no provision for their protection after they have discharged cargoes and started on their return voyage. I am sure the German Government in acceding to our request wishes to do it in a whole-hearted way, and will have no objection to undertaking that there shall be no interference with these ships on their return voyage from Rotterdam to British ports, so long as they fly our flag. We have no objection to the condition that there is to be no return cargo, and we will take the responsibility that our flag shall not be used except for the direct return.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

[10] Document 120, chapter iv.

DOCUMENT NO. 318

Letter, GERARD TO ZIMMERMANN, *concerning the exemption of local food supplies in Belgium from requisition and concerning the safety of belligerent ships flying the C.R.B. flag*

BERLIN, 28 December 1914

Actual Privy Counsellor, Mr. Zimmermann
Imperial Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY:

After my call on you last Saturday, on which occasion I was not acting officially but as one of the Honorary Chairmen of the Belgian Relief Commission, I sent to my Government and to the Chairman of the Commission the following telegram:

"Acting not officially, but as one of the Honorary Chairmen Belgian Relief Commission called today with Spanish Ambassador and Netherlands Minister on Undersecretary of State Zimmermann, who gladly and without hesitation assured us that Commanding General in Belgium will give assurances to American, Spanish, and Netherlands Ministers in Belgium that German military authorities will not make any further requisitions of food supplies in Belgium while the International Commissions are sending in food, and for a reasonable time after the last delivery."

There is, however, another matter in which the Belgian Relief Commission required the assurance of the German Government. Supplies are being sent to Belgium in British ships. These ships fly the flag of the Commission, and carry nothing but these supplies for Belgium. Will the Imperial Government not give a public assurance that these boats will not only not be interfered with on the voyage to Belgium, but that there will be no interference with these ships on their return to British ports, so long as they return direct to such ports and sail under the flag of the Commission.

I have the honor to be, my dear Mr. Secretary,

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) JAMES W. GERARD

DOCUMENT NO. 319

Telegram, WHITLOCK TO STATE DEPARTMENT, *announcing that von Bissing had given orders forbidding all further requisition of foodstuffs of whatever sort*

BRUSSELS, 2 January 1915

STATE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON

I have received today assurances from Baron von Bissing, German Governor-General in Belgium, that orders have been given forbidding all further requisition of foodstuffs of whatever sort in Belgian ter-

ritory occupied by German troops, and that the protection thus afforded covers cattle and their food as well. He will give any reiterated assurances that we may desire on any occasion that foodstuffs will not be requisitioned, and that we may establish and maintain any kind of control that we may see fit to adopt in connection with our relief work for the civil population. Similar assurances were given to my Spanish colleague.

WHITLOCK

Both Zimmermann's verbal promise to Gerard and von Bissing's assurances to Whitlock came promptly into Hoover's hands. These appeared to meet British demands completely since they provided that all foodstuffs of whatever sort would be free from requisition. Hoover believed that they were exactly what he required at this stage for his negotiations with the British for governmental support. He found, however, in his interview with Sir Edward Grey on the 13th January 1915[11] that the Foreign Office now required that the Germans be persuaded to abandon certain other policies in Belgium before the British Government would commit itself in the matter of financial aid. The Germans had imposed a levy of 40,000,000 francs per month on Belgium and Sir Edward Grey declared that the British Government could not be expected to contribute funds for the support of Belgian relief so long as the Germans continued to extort money from the Belgian people. In spite of this new stipulation Hoover continued to press for wider British support, and a week later Lloyd George[12] consented to the establishment of the exchange plan as one means of financing relief. In these negotiations with the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Hoover had supported his main argument with information from Berlin and Brussels that the protection of all native food supplies for the civilian population had been guaranteed by the Germans. Unfortunately, as the following documents show, the Imperial authorities had made an important reservation in the guarantees, which was contrary to the understanding of Messrs. Gerard and Whitlock on whose assurances Hoover had based his argument with the British.

[11] See Document 125, chapter iv.

[12] See Document 129, chapter iv.

DOCUMENT NO. 320

Telegram, GERARD TO HOOVER, *from which Hoover for the first time realized the reservations in Zimmermann's assurances regarding requisitions*

BERLIN, 22 January 1915

HOOVER, LONDON

After sending you my letter of January 2d and telegram of December 26th I received a note from Foreign Office here stating that Germans would only refrain from requisitioning "food or forage which would require to be replaced by importation by the Committee of Belgian Relief." In addition . . .[13]

GERARD

DOCUMENT NO. 321

Letter, ZIMMERMANN TO GERARD, *confirming, but with important alterations, the guarantee against requisition in Belgium*

BERLIN, 31 December 1914

His Excellency, Mr. Gerard,
Ambassador of the United States of America

The undersigned has the honor to inform His Excellency, Mr. Gerard, Ambassador of the United States of America, with reference to the esteemed note of the 28th instant, that the Imperial Governor-General in Belgium will issue without delay an order prohibiting all the troops under his command from requisitioning food or forage of any kind whatsoever which would require to be replaced by importations by the American Committee for Belgian Relief. The Governor-General will, in addition, authorize the Minister of the United States and the Spanish Minister at Brussels as Honorary Chairmen of the Committee, to convince themselves in any way which may to them appear advisable that the prohibition is observed most scrupulously.

With regard to the desire that non-neutral ships bringing food for Belgium may not be interfered with on their return to British ports, and that assurance to this effect might be given, reference is respectfully made to the Note Verbale of the 24th instant, No. 3 of which contains provisions dealing with this desire.

The undersigned avails himself of the opportunity to renew to the Ambassador the assurances of his most distinguished consideration.

(Signed) ZIMMERMANN

[*Translation*]

[13] Balance of telegram badly garbled. This telegram was received by Hoover through the American Embassy on the 26th January 1915. See Document 321 for Zimmermann note, which reached London at a later date.

DOCUMENT NO. 322

Decree, by VON BISSING, *prohibiting the requisition by the German authorities of foodstuffs in Belgium*

BRUSSELS, 21 January 1915

General Government in Belgium:

With my approval the guarantee has been given to the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, through the intermediary of the Foreign Office that all troops under my orders are forbidden to requisition foodstuffs or artificially prepared fodder materials of any kind whatsoever, replacement of which must be effectuated through importation by the Comité.

In issuing this prohibition in supplement to the decree of November 24th, 1914, (IV a. II b. No. 727/II. II), I remark that it has been a question hitherto, in the supplies imported by the Comité, of flour and breadstuffs, rice, peas, beans, salt, maize, and sugar, but that, in the near future, there will also presumably be imported fodder-cakes and other artificially prepared fodder materials.

Supplies of this sort therefore may no longer be requisitioned under any conditions by the troops placed under my command, consequently not even against payment.

The exception made in article 6 of my decree of December 29th, 1914 (IV.a.1628/12 I.), in regard to the goods in bulk detained in Antwerp *pp* [*praemissis praemittendis*] is valid in the present case also.

(Signed) BARON VON BISSING

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 323

Letter, VON SANDT TO WHITLOCK, *defining the Governor-General's ordinance against requisitions as applying only to the Occupation Zone*

BRUSSELS, 18 February 1915

To His Excellency, Mr. Brand Whitlock, Brussels

In reply to Your Excellency's very obliging communication of the 5th instant, I have the honor to say that the ordinance of the Governor-General of the 21st ultimo, concerning a further restriction in the matter of requisitions applies only to the Occupation Zone and not to the Étape.

I have the honor to remain, etc.

VON SANDT

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 324

Letter, VON BISSING TO COMITÉ NATIONAL, *declining to exempt from requisition all foods produced in Belgium as demanded by the British Government*

BRUSSELS, 12 March 1915

Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation, Brussels

Referring to your letter of the 9th instant, I am quite willing, in order to encourage the humanitarian efforts of the Comité which have always had my warmest sympathies, to confirm herewith the previous declarations which have already been given to the Comité in October 1914 and January of this year.

According to these, the foodstuffs of all kinds imported by the Comité for the feeding of the civil population of Belgium remain exclusively reserved for the population of Belgium, and must remain free from military requisitions. I also repeat, in conformity with my declaration of January, that all troops under my orders in the Occupation Zone are forbidden to take, even against payment, foodstuffs and artificial foods for animals, of any kind whatsoever, which are replaced through importations by the Comité. I attach herewith copy of my instructions of January 21, 1915, to my troops.

I cannot agree with your opinion that "every product obtained from our soil" is already being imported by you, and could therefore no longer be requisitioned. In particular, it is not within my knowledge that oats, straw, hay, potatoes, fresh vegetables, and sugar are imported in such quantities that my prohibition should be extended to these articles also.

If English financial circles demand a more extended declaration in the sense that the Imperial General Government exempt from requisition all foods without any distinction, necessary for the maintenance of the people and animals, which shall be produced hereafter in the country, I regret that I am not in a position to give such a declaration. On the contrary, adherence must be continued to the principle that the stocks of articles specified in detail, which were still in the country at the time of the publication of my declaration of January 21, 1915, shall be kept for the country and may not be requisitioned in favor of the troops, even against payment.

Having thus quite clearly explained my point of view to the Comité, I am very willing, by the delivery of a passport, to make possible a trip to London of the Comité's delegate, Monsieur Francqui, for the purpose of negotiations planned by him.[14]

The Governor General

(Signed) BARON VON BISSING

[*Translation*]

[14] See chapter vi, Document 274 and footnote.

Von Bissing's order of the 21st January 1915[15] left no doubt that the Germans were determined not to extend their prohibition of requisitions to include all native products. This stiffening of the German position fortunately did not cause the negotiations to break down, for there was at this moment a softening in the British attitude toward the relief. Assured of British aid if he could get the Germans to relinquish indemnities Hoover decided to go to Berlin to plead the Belgian case before the highest officials. The complete story of these Berlin negotiations is told in chapter iv, Documents 131 to 143.[16] On the matter of indemnities Hoover found the Germans as unmovable as in the matter of requisitions and hence, if the British maintained the position they had taken, the Commission's program was headed for disaster because of lack of funds. In view of this serious possibility, Hoover discussed in Berlin and in Brussels other means of financing the Relief, particularly a relief loan to be floated in America. But here again the question of native produce arose. Hoover knew that the German assurance that all native produce would be reserved for the civil population would have to be actually engraved on the face of the certificates before the American bankers and public would consider the purchase of bonds.[17]

Hoover returned to London with a clear and definite confirmation from the highest German authorities of the various guarantees already given, but without the new guarantees he particularly desired. He found the British Government extremely interested in the report of his mission to Berlin and inclined to accommodation. The Foreign Office[18] kept its record clear by refusing "direct" assistance, but Lloyd George advised[19] Hoover that finance would be supplied through the Belgian Government "to the new harvest."

This timely but by no means permanent solution of the financial difficulties of the Commission had come rather

[15] See Document 322.

[16] Gerard's comment on Zimmermann's maneuver in reducing his assurances is particularly interesting, as is also Hoover's comment that it "looks as if they [the military] were intending to denude the country before the question of replacement arises." Document 133, chapter iv.

[17] See Documents 142 and 143, chapter iv.

[18] See Document 144, chapter iv.

[19] See Document 145, chapter iv.

more quickly than even Hoover had dared to anticipate. It was evident, however, that since his first conversation with Lloyd George on the 21st January[20] the Chancellor of the Exchequer had become a staunch supporter of the Commission. He was alert to the humanitarian aspect of the relief operations and more than some of the members of the Government he appreciated the force of world opinion which had been mobilized behind the Commission's activities. The first drive for relief contributions in America was in full swing and a powerful public interest in the fate of Belgium was aroused. There might be doubt as to whether American opinion was pro-Ally or pro-German but there was no doubt that it was overwhelmingly pro-Belgian.

2. *The Belgian Harvest of 1915. March–July 1915*

As soon as Hoover was assured of this temporary respite—a subsidy until June—he began to press the Germans to give such guarantees respecting the new harvest of 1915 as would insure justice to the Belgians and meet the reasonable British demands. The documents which follow show Hoover's efforts in this direction. They also indicate that the British were determined to make no further concessions.

DOCUMENT NO. 325

Extracts of letter, Hoover to Gerard, *describing the situation with regard to native crops and suggesting an appeal to the Emperor*

London, 27 March 1915

His Excellency, James Gerard,
American Ambassador, Berlin

Dear Mr. Gerard:

. . . . . .

The real important situation, which I set out in my separate letter, revolves round our desire to protect this year's harvest in Belgium, for if the present military situation is going to continue there is nothing in God's world which will save the Belgians from extinction except their own products, and if these are going to be taken away from them we may just as well throw up our hands today as next August. We would like you to consider whether or not it would not

[20] See Document 129, chapter iv.

be wise if you would have a personal discussion with the Emperor on this major question and possibly the minor ones. I feel that for us to go back to the civil authorities in Berlin only places us in further difficulties in Brussels, as von Bissing only resents any such negotiations on our part, and the civil authorities in Berlin have no authority over him at all. If you do not think it is possible to do anything by way of a personal interview and that it could be framed up by the Emperor in such a manner as not to put us in the wrong, I doubt the wisdom of opening it up in any formal way through the Foreign Office.

It comes to this: that interference on our behalf by the civil government in Berlin only makes our state worse in Belgium and we would rather fight along directly with von Bissing than have the interference of the German Foreign Office. If, on the other hand, the Emperor himself would interest himself in seeing that our humanitarian efforts are carried out on the lines of the separate letter which I enclose, our path would then be comparatively easy, for not only can I provide the finance until next August but the crop in Belgium would carry these people on another four months after that date. I have written this separate letter in such a form that it might be possible that you could use it directly with the Emperor.

. . . . . .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

ENCLOSURE

. . . . . .

You will recollect the conversation which we had in Berlin with various members of the government, which finally settled down to a proposal from the German Government that they would facilitate the creation of Belgian provincial obligations which we group together and upon which we could float a loan for Belgian relief, and I was informed in Berlin that the German Government would have no objection to its being guaranteed by the Belgian Government at Havre, the object of this Belgian Government guarantee being to give assurances to the lenders that the loan would be recognized by the Belgian Government if it came into power. We were referred to Brussels to settle the details.

I went to Brussels and was there informed by a member of the German Finance Ministry that before this project could be further consummated it would be necessary to have a firm agreement with the English Government that the shipping of the foodstuffs into Belgium would not be interfered with through the whole period of the war. I therefore returned to England and busied myself at once about securing this assurance. The English Foreign Office finally replied that they would have no objection to giving the assurance but that it would be conditional upon an agreement from the German Government to you that (*a*) there should be likewise no requisitions or purchases by the Germans of native or imported foodstuffs, cattle,

or cattle fodder of any kind in Belgium throughout the war, and (*b*) that the Commission for Relief in Belgium should maintain an adequate staff in Belgium properly to account for the responsibility of the distribution of the imported foodstuffs to the civilian population and the consummation of the guarantees as above. I communicated this fact to our colleagues in Brussels, and Mr. Francqui as Chairman of the Comité National took up negotiations with the representatives of the German Finance Department and stated that it would be necessary to have these undertakings. The local representatives in Brussels stated that this matter would have to be referred to Berlin, and nothing was accomplished. Later on Mr. Francqui addressed a letter to General von Bissing, asking that such undertakings should be given, because it was hopeless for us to secure finance unless such guarantees were given as would protect this year's harvests. His Excellency replied refusing to extend these undertakings already given, and in effect pointing out that these undertakings only applied to foodstuffs remaining in the country as at January 21st; that is, they make no undertaking as to anything introduced after that date. We are therefore brought to an absolute deadlock.

The English Government refuses absolutely to give any such undertaking as the Germans wish with regard to shipping unless the Germans give assurances on their side as to leaving the Belgians the use of their meager food supply and their future production, and, moreover, as stated above, it is utterly useless for us to endeavor to raise a loan from financial houses without both assurances. No one is going to lend us money with which to buy food when the probability stares us in the face that the German Army will take possession of the harvest or that the English will suppress our operations.

We are now getting into desperate financial straits and the Commission at the present moment is 32,000,000 marks in debt on the Belgian account. This arises from the fact that in the hope that we would solve the above difficulties we have made purchases which are vitally necessary in order to maintain the regular flow of foodstuff into Belgium. Our situation was so desperate that I asked Mr. Francqui to come over and see if we could not devise some measure to raise money. We have succeeded to the extent of enough money to cover our obligations to the end of April by advances which we are securing partly as a matter of exchange on Belgium and partly as advances on guarantees by Belgian banks. These operations, however, exhaust present resources. We have, however, to purchase over 40,000,000 marks of food per month on Belgian account and our philanthropic support has now dwindled to about 8,000,000 marks a month, so that unless we can obtain the assurances that we have asked for we shall come to a hopeless debacle about the 1st of May as we shall then be unable to meet our progressive liabilities from resources now in hand.

Inasmuch as it appears to me that the things we have asked for are so moderate, I cannot believe that the secondary German officials

refuse owing to the lack of broad understanding as to the importance of this work from the German point of view, to say nothing of its humanitarian aspect.

. . . . . .

DOCUMENT NO. 326

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *commenting on unsatisfactory clauses in the Commission's agreement with the German General Staff*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
6 April 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Many thanks for your letter of the 29th ultimo, regarding your agreement[21] with the German General Staff about the conditions of your work in Northern France.

As I told you the other day, the conditions of your work in these districts are not our business, but are matters for the French Government. But it may be worth while for me to point out, in connection with our recent correspondence, that this Government would regard these conditions as wholly unsatisfactory if applied in any way to Belgium.

Points 4 and 5 are of course the offending provisions. The Germans here admit that they have done in France what in effect they have recently taken steps to do in Belgium by enforcing the registration of all stocks of foodstuffs in the country—namely to take all such stocks under their own control and then plead that they are their own stocks and not the stocks of the civil population. You remember the history of the military stores at Antwerp and you are doubtless aware of the other enormous seizures at Antwerp from private stores like those of the Liebig factory. You remember too the parade of generosity with which the Germans placed half their "military" stores at Brussels at your disposal in December, provided you replaced them eventually. The fixed policy of the Germans is clearly to make larceny a title of ownership and we rely upon you to resist all such attempts at encroachment in Belgium by every means in your power.

But though point 4 is bad, point 5 is infinitely worse. We really must insist that in Belgium the Germans shall scrupulously respect the produce of the next harvest. Any attempt on the part of the Germans to go back on or to restrict the application of their undertaking to requisition no more foodstuffs in Belgium; any attempt to get hold of the next harvest by indirect means; will lead us immediately to reconsider our whole attitude. We must be satisfied that the certainty of the continuance of your supplies does not enable the Germans to

[21] See chapter vi, Document 281.

divert to their own use one ounce of the food which would otherwise be at the disposal of the civil population. We must be satisfied of this, not only by guarantees given by the Germans, but by adequate supervision maintained by your agents and facilitated by the German authorities. We have compromised on many points hitherto, but we can assent to no compromise on this point. And the German conditions as to the French districts are therefore gravely disquieting, because they indicate an intention generously to allow you to exist provided that they are thereby enabled to take every scrap of food which the country has produced in the past or may produce in the future. This is intolerable and, in the interests of the continuance of the various arrangements under which you work, I sincerely hope that you will be able to induce the Germans to abandon this impossible position.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 327

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *commenting on the C.R.B. agreement with the German General Staff on feeding in Northern France*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
21 April 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Many thanks for your letter of the 19th. The new treaty[22] with the Germans in France is certainly an improvement on the first one, but point 8 contains the objectionable features against which I protested in the first.

As to the harvest, I know that Mr. Gerard is going to the Emperor personally about it, so I will say no more than that a settlement on this point is absolutely necessary if our present arrangements are to continue.

As to the continuance of requisitions against "bons," the provision is, to say the least, strange. In the first treaty the Germans said that there were no more foodstuffs in the possession of the population, as they had all been converted into military stores. The two statements do not tally, but both are absolutely inadmissible from our point of view.

The above is my own opinion only, but I feel most strongly about it, and I don't think anyone here is likely to feel less strongly than I!

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

[22] See chapter vi, Document 283.

DOCUMENT NO. 328

Extract of letter, HOOVER TO GERARD, *stating that if the Germans refused to make a guarantee to reserve the local harvest for the Belgians, the Allies would cause the Commission's work to end on the 15th August 1915*

LONDON, 1 May 1915

His Excellency the Honorable James Gerard
American Ambassador, Berlin

DEAR MR. GERARD:

. . . . . .

I have, however, just received an intimation from the Allied Governments of another phase of this matter which is of dominating importance. They now say that if the Germans will make no undertaking to leave to the Belgians their harvest, the Allied Governments will have to insist that the efforts and organization of this Committee come to an end on the 15th day of August and that it should then absolutely dissolve. This would be a great pity, because if the present situation should continue into next year and even if the Belgians did retain their harvest and their local production, their breadstuffs would not be likely to last beyond the end of October in any event. You can yourself imagine what would be the attitude of the military party in this country, with whom we have had such infinite difficulties, if next autumn we should propose to re-enter Belgium and in the meantime the Germans had requisitioned or absorbed any of the native food supplies. The contention of this element in the Allied Governments, that the efforts of this Commission were merely replenishing requisitioned material, would be self-evident and I am certain we could never again obtain approval to restart.

When I addressed you last it was with the hope that some undertaking with regard to the harvest could be entered upon, in order to facilitate the financial gap in our budget between now and harvest. We have had to fight our own way through this difficulty and are likely to succeed. But if the Germans would like to keep this Commission alive as against the eventuality that they still occupy the same territory after the end of next October, it is positively essential that they should make, at once, a broad and sufficient undertaking with regard to the whole of the foodstuffs produced within the Occupation Zone. If we are to go on after harvest we have also got to make some sort of definite financial arrangements for our support. If the German Government would comply with our request for a definite and broad undertaking with regard to the protection of the native food supplies during the whole of their occupation, I am satisfied that we could create some kind of a financial institution and float a loan on the back of the Belgian provinces. We should not, in this event, require any direct assistance from the German Government, but I can only reiterate that the whole future of the business now depends upon whether the German Government will enter into such undertakings with regard to native production.

Work in Northern France

You will be glad to know that we have got this business on to a satisfactory working basis and have already distributed over 20,000 tons of flour to these people. The German authorities are co-operating in the most cordial and efficient manner and the work is going very smoothly.

Some Side Issues

You will please find enclosed herewith, copy of a purported interview with General von Bissing, which appeared in the New York *Staatszeitung* on the 12th April. I have telegraphed most of this interview to Brussels and asked them to confirm from General von Bissing whether or no he made such statements. I cannot believe that he did. The inference from the statements is that we are a lot of commercial pirates operating under the cloak of charity and our staff at this end and in New York are so indignant that they threaten to resign unless the matter can be put right before the American people and I am afraid that some of them will break loose and express their opinions of General von Bissing in a manner which will not enhance the opinion of the neutral world as to his administration. I am, however, trying to hold them in leash. Every German official in Belgium must know perfectly well that there are now 1,500,000 people being fed gratis from the public canteens and that these canteens are being supported by this Commission. Also General von Bissing is perfectly well aware that whereas we do sell foodstuffs to those who can still pay, at a small margin of profit, this margin of profit goes to assist in the support of the canteens and to make up some part of the deficiency which must be otherwise supplied entirely by public charity. By the middle of August we shall have expended a total of over M. 250,000,000 on foodstuffs for the Belgians and of this between M.60,000,000 and M. 70,000,000 will have been spent on the destitute, which sums have been secured by way of donations amounting to approximately M. 50,000,000, and we have earned a balance of M. 10,000,000 or M. 20,000,000 out of profits made from the sale of foodstuffs to those who can pay. Furthermore we shall have achieved a point of merit in that although a small profit is earned on the foodstuffs sold, we have maintained the price of bread in Belgium at from 10 per cent to 15 per cent below the price in London. This could only have been accomplished by the efficient volunteer and self-denying efforts of the many hundreds of Americans who have been engaged upon this task. If we are to maintain this machinery in existence after August it is going to be necessary not only to have the question of requisition settled but that General von Bissing shall remove the stigma which he has placed over this body of idealists. I, however, sometimes feel constrained to believe that there is nothing that an American can do which in German eyes is not founded on sinister motives no matter how much the Germans themselves may benefit from it.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) Herbert Hoover, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 329

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *stating that unless satisfactory guarantees respecting the Belgian crop of 1915 be promptly secured from the Germans, the operations of the C.R.B. would not be permitted after the middle of August 1915*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
4 May 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

You will remember that on April 6th I wrote to you a letter,[23] the latter part of which dealt with the question of the treatment by the Germans of the coming harvest in the districts in German occupation where you are carrying on your provisioning work. I there explained to you that we could assent to no compromise on this point; that we "must insist that in Belgium the Germans shall scrupulously respect the produce of the next harvest."

Some time has passed and I have heard nothing further from you. Meanwhile we have been allowing you to send seed into Belgium, in the belief that the harvest when it comes will be used exclusively for the civil population whom you have so narrowly saved from starvation during all these months. We cannot wait much longer for a satisfactory declaration of the attitude of the German authorities, nor can I run any risk of your being able to say in the future that I did not give you sufficient warning of what may happen.

It is self-evident to me, and must be equally so to you, that your work will in all probability have to stop when the harvest matures, that is to say, I presume, about the middle of August, unless positive guarantees are forthcoming from the German authorities that they will scrupulously respect, and abstain from requisitioning, the harvest in all the areas where your work is going on. I even foresee that, unless such guarantees are given soon, a strong opinion will develop in this country that your work should not continue up to the moment of the new harvest, thus tiding the Germans over the whole period until they obtain new material for requisitions. The Germans have given nothing to the people of these areas during the past months; they must take nothing from them during the months to come.

In view of these probable grave results of the present uncertainty, I sincerely trust that you will be able to inform me very soon, and at any rate before the end of the present month, that you have obtained the necessary guarantees from the German authorities.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

[23] See Document 326.

DOCUMENT NO. 330

Letter, GERARD TO VON JAGOW,[24] *stating the necessity of German guarantees respecting the Belgian crop if the C.R.B. is to continue its operations*[25]

AMERICAN EMBASSY, BERLIN
5 May 1915

His Excellency, Herr von Jagow
Imperial Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

MY DEAR EXCELLENCY:

At the instance of Mr. Hoover, Chairman of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, I have the honor to bring herewith to Your Excellency's kind consideration certain aspects of the work of the Commission as regards the disposition of this year's harvest in Belgium.

As Your Excellency is perhaps aware, the Commission was unable to complete definite financial arrangements in England for financing the Commission without obtaining from the Imperial Government a broad undertaking that no more native foodstuffs would be requisitioned in Belgium by the German authorities until peace was concluded, such an undertaking referring only to the Occupation Zone, not to the Operation Zone.

Up to the present time the Commission has been able to revolve their resources by virtue of a considerable amount of commercial exchange in Belgium, which it has secured by advertising in the United States that it would make payments in Belgium as against moneys paid to it in that country and it has therefore gathered up a good many balances owing to Belgian firms and individuals in the United States as a result of pre-war trading operations. Furthermore, it has had some money from the Belgian Government for distribution among the communes in Belgium, in accordance with the arrangements made, with the approval of the German authorities, in Brussels on December 1st last. The Commission is not certain whether or not it can maintain its finances in order until the next harvest, but hopes for the best.

The Commission has, however, just received an intimation from the Allied Governments of another phase of the matter of serious importance. The Commission is informed by them that, if the Imperial Government will not make an undertaking to leave to the Belgians their harvest, the Allied Governments will have to insist that the efforts and organization of this Commission come to an end on the 15th day of August and that it should then absolutely dissolve.

[24] This letter is a paraphrase of a letter from Hoover to Gerard dated the 1st May 1915 (Document 328).

[25] Negotiations were delayed because of the tense diplomatic situation which followed the sinking of the "Lusitania." On the 31st May 1915 the British Government indicated its intention of making public its position in this matter by a note to the United States Government.

The Commission considers this a great pity, because if the present situation should continue into next year, and even if the Belgians did retain their harvest and their local production, the breadstuffs would not be likely to last beyond the end of October in any event. The Commission is of the opinion that, should the Commission, having thus been compelled to suspend its work because of the absence of such an undertaking on the part of Germany, propose to re-enter Belgium next autumn, and the German authorities had requisitioned or absorbed any of the native food supplies, it would never be possible for the Commission to obtain permission from the British authorities to resume its activities on the ground that the Commission would be merely replenishing requisitioned supplies.

It therefore results, in the opinion of the Commission, that, if the Imperial Government desires to keep the Commission alive as against the eventuality that the German forces still occupy the same territory after the end of next October, it is positively essential that it should make, at once, a broad and adequate undertaking with regard to the whole of the foodstuffs produced within the Occupation Zone.

Furthermore, if the Commission is to go on after the harvest, it feels that it must make some sort of financial arrangements for its support. The Commission is of the opinion that, if the Imperial Government would comply with the request for a definite and broad undertaking with regard to the protection of the native food supplies during the whole of the occupation of Belgian territory by German forces, the Commission is confident that it could create some kind of a financial institution and float a loan on the back of the Belgian provinces. In this event, the Commission would not require any direct assistance from the Imperial Government.

Mr. Hoover concludes by reiterating that the whole future of the undertaking now depends upon whether the Imperial Government will enter into such undertakings with regard to the native production.

I avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) JAMES W. GERARD

DOCUMENT NO. 331

Extracts of letter, FRANCQUI TO HOOVER, *stating his opinion that on the basis of the agreements made the seizure of the Belgian crop by the Germans was not a sufficient reason for the British stopping further imports by the Commission*

BRUSSELS, 7 May 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

The Minister of the United States has kindly handed me a copy of the letter you sent him on the 20th April last, which reached Brussels after a long delay due to the interruption of the mail service.

The perusal of your letter suggested to me the following remarks:

Future Policy.—As you have most wisely covered the needs of the Belgian population until the 15/31 August next, we must now, above all, consider the question of the next crop.

In order to explain clearly my views, I wish to review the guarantees granted by the German authorities and which have led England to allow the importation of goods to Belgium.

The first of these guarantees results from a letter of Baron von der Goltz on the 16th October 1914,[26] . . . .

On January last, as the outcome of your endeavors in Berlin and of our negotiations in Brussels, we were able to obtain an additional guarantee. By an order dated 21st January[27] . . . .

This statement shows quite clearly that the next crop is unprotected. Should the German authorities seize all or a part of this, we could only base our protest upon the Treaty of The Hague and the international agreements, but the German Government would not be open to any reproach for breach of agreement.

On the other side, seizure of the new crop would in no case furnish the British Government with a pretext to stop the flow of goods to Belgium, as their consent has been given on the basis of Baron von der Goltz' letter of 16th October, which Mr. Gibson, Baron Lambert, and myself communicated to Mr. Asquith.

It seems therefore beyond doubt that if necessary—I mean in case of seizure of the next harvest—we are at liberty to keep on provisioning Belgium.

(Signed) E. Francqui

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 332

Letter, Percy to Hoover, *regarding the attitude of the Comité National on the British threat to stop imports*

Foreign Office, London
26 May 1915

Dear Mr. Hoover:

. . . . . .

I think the Belgians of the Comité National should recognize that we are putting up a fight to preserve their harvest for them, and not object to our action in the matter.

There is, it is true, no "bluff" about our action, as we are in deadly earnest about stopping the whole arrangement if the necessary guarantee is not given, but the whole value of our attitude as a means of putting pressure on the Germans will be compromised if

[26] Chapter i, Document 7.

[27] Document 322.

the Comité National regard us as hard-hearted tyrants instead of backing our attitude up with what influence they have in Belgium.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 333

Extract of letter, HOOVER TO WHITLOCK, *regarding the likelihood that relief work would be ended on the 15th August and Hoover's intention of going to Berlin to attempt to get the concessions necessary to permit the work to go on*

LONDON, 26 May 1915

The Honorable Brand Whitlock
American Minister, Brussels

DEAR MR. WHITLOCK:

I should be glad if you would communicate the following to our friends in Brussels, also the enclosed copy of letter from the Foreign Office.

From discussions I have had with the Foreign Office people . . . . There is no doubt in my mind that they are fairly in earnest as regards their notice that we must bring our work to an end by the middle of August unless some undertaking is secured with regard to the next harvest. I had intended to come to Belgium long before this to have a general discussion upon the whole situation, but the events arising out of the "Lusitania" incident have made this undesirable until some settlement has been reached in that matter. . . . . On two successive occasions where vital matters have been at stake, an entire change has been obtained by me through intervention in Berlin. . . . . I assume that this course will have to be pursued again, if the stream of foodstuffs is to be kept flowing. . . . .

. . . . . .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 334

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *declining to wait longer for German guarantees and stating British intention to place the matter formally before the United States Government*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
31 May 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Many thanks for your letter of the 27th about the harvest. I quite recognize the difficulties you have been under as regards pushing the question at Brussels under present circumstances, but I do not think

that it would be of any use to wait longer before taking the matter up officially with the United States Government. The matter is too serious to be any longer delayed—but an official communication to the United States Government should assist you in getting a favourable reply.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 335

Telegram, HOOVER TO BATES, *suggesting that a representative of the Imperial German Bank in America be informed of the situation and probable consequences*

LONDON, 1 June 1915

LINDON BATES, NEW YORK:

Suggest you inform your Imperial Bank friend that we have been given absolute orders by Allied Governments to provide no food supplies for Belgium beyond August 15th unless Germans positively undertake that there be no requisitioning next harvest within Occupation Zone. I am confident there will be no retreat from this position and the whole work of Commission comes to an early end unless Germans continue the undertaking which they gave last December in such manner as to cover this harvest. We have done all we could and it is up to them to say whether they desire the activities of this organization to continue.

HOOVER

Having brought from different quarters considerable pressure on the Germans to agree not to requisition the Belgian harvest, Hoover went to Brussels to take the matter up personally with the German authorities. As a last resort he was prepared to go on to Berlin to appeal to the Imperial Government. But this was not necessary, for on his arrival in Brussels he discovered that the Germans were in a more conciliatory mood. The Governor-General, he learned, was ready to accept the principle that the Belgian harvest should be utilized exclusively for the Belgian people. This was a victory of the greatest importance, for it not only saved the local harvest for Belgians, but it also saved the relief enterprise from disaster. It remained for Hoover to work out with the Germans and the British a formula for applying the principle that would be acceptable to both

parties.[28] The following documents show the steps by which this formula was evolved and the decrees of the Governor-General putting the principle into effect.

DOCUMENT NO. 336

Memorandum, by Hoover, *submitted by Whitlock to von der Lancken, suggesting a general guarantee to be subscribed to by the German Governor-General*

Brussels, 18 June 1915

Memorandum for Baron von der Lancken

The Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium, under the patronage of the Ministers of Spain and the United States, and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands, will continue to import, till the harvest of 1916, the necessary materials for the feeding of the civil population in the occupied territory, placed under the rule of the Governor-General in Belgium.

The Governor-General in Belgium will, on his side, leave at the disposal of the Belgian civil population placed under his orders, the produce of the harvest of wheat of 1915, relating to the materials for bread-making (wheat, barley).

As soon as the Governor-General has decided on the subject of the division of the harvest, whether it should be distributed over the whole country, or only in the agricultural districts, or else following some entirely different plan, the decision come to is to be communicated to the Ministers of Spain and the United States of America and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands for transmission to the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium so that they may make their plans accordingly.

DOCUMENT NO. 337

Memorandum, by Hoover, *sent to von der Lancken through Whitlock, disclosing the pressure from the British Government and indicating the desirability of a prompt confirmation by the German authorities of the guarantees they had accepted in principle*

Brussels, 22 June 1915

Memorandum for Baron von der Lancken

I. The C.R.B. has been for some time under negotiation with German shipping companies and with the German and Dutch Governments with a view to the employment of interned German cargo ships[29] to handle the entire relief foodstuffs. This negotiation is

[28] See particularly Documents 336 and 339 below.

[29] Documents 207 to 213, chapter v.

practically consummated to the point of signing the agreement. Aside from giving employment to German ships on remunerative rates, the saving to the Commission and thus to the people of Belgium will amount to about £150,000 per month or £5,000 per diem. The only thing which prevents our completing this contract and thus employing these ships instead of others, is the negotiation for the harvest; and every day's delay costs the people of Belgium £5,000.

II. It has been with a great deal of difficulty that the English Government could be prevented from issuing a note through the press exposing their paternal interest in the people of Belgium and the desire to secure to them the harvest, and that the Commission is ordered to cease shipments into Belgium until such a settlement can be arrived at. It has been the feeling of the Commission that such an exhibition on the part of the English Government would greatly embarrass all negotiations, and their keen desire that the German Government should be the first to announce this arrangement. Since I came to Belgium we have had two indications from London of the extreme restiveness of the English Government, and it is with difficulty that they are being held back from what they consider would be an action advantageous to their prestige; and it would be most disagreeable to us, now that the German Government has agreed on principle, that it should appear that this had been done under pressure from the English Government as would be the case if any such public announcement were made now by that Government.

III. It is perfectly immaterial to the C.R.B. whether or not these negotiations reach a successful consummation, except as to their interest in the people of Belgium. The Commission is glad to serve the Belgian people and the German Government by giving free service of its members to this important humanitarian work. But, if it is not the wish of the German Government to facilitate this matter, or that the Commission should continue on personal grounds, it would be only too glad to retire from the entire situation, which will involve Northern France as well as Belgium.

DOCUMENT NO. 338

Memorandum, by VON BISSING, *confirming the verbal guarantee not to requisition the Belgian crop of 1915. Forwarded by Whitlock to Hoover*

BRUSSELS, 25 June 1915

Herbert C. Hoover, Rotterdam

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

I have just had the pleasure of an interview with His Excellency Baron von der Lancken, and he has handed me the enclosed memorandum from His Excellency, Baron von Bissing, Governor-General in Belgium, in which His Excellency sets forth his willingness to hold at the disposal of the civil population of Belgium the new crop that will be gathered this summer.

The formal exchange of letters on this subject will take place within a few days, when certain details shall have been arranged with the Comité National.

I am very glad, as I am sure you will be, at this happy outcome of our efforts, and I feel more than ever convinced that it is a very good understanding on all sides and that things will now go on in a very agreeable manner.

With many kind regards,

I am ever your friend

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

MEMORANDUM

The Governor-General in Belgium will hold at the disposal of the Belgian civil population of the territory placed under his orders the product of the grain harvest of 1915 used for the making of bread (wheat and rye).

On its side, the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium under the patronage of the Ministers of Spain, the United States of America, and the Netherlands, will continue to import into Belgium, in about equal monthly quantities, until the harvest of 1916, the necessary commodities for the feeding of the civil population within the occupied territory placed under the orders of the Governor-General.

Immediately the Governor-General shall have taken a decision with regard to the distribution of the harvest of grain above mentioned for 1915, this decision will be brought to the knowledge of the protecting ministers.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 339

Letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *concerning the German guarantees and asking for an undertaking by the British Government not to interfere with shipments and suggesting the nature of the limitations which the British might make in their commitment*

LONDON, 30 June 1915

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

In the matter of our conversation of yesterday, regarding General von Bissing's undertaking as to the harvest, I understand that this will be communicated to you formally by the American Ambassador, with the request for an undertaking from you that this Commission will not be interfered with during the next year, in its effort to provision the people of Belgium. Such an undertaking is obviously necessary to us before we can agree with the Germans to continue imports.

If you still feel that you must impose limitations on your commitment, I would suggest that it should not go further than the following, duly put into diplomatic language:

"His Majesty's Government notes that General von Bissing has undertaken that the wheat and rye harvest in the Occupation Zone in Belgium shall be reserved exclusively for the civil population in Belgium, to be issued to the population in twelve equal monthly instalments. We also note that you wish an assurance to the Commission that their shipping shall not be interfered with by us, in order that they may be able to import the necessary supplement to the harvest. We are willing to give this assurance, but it must be understood that this undertaking continues only so long as the following conditions are observed:

"*a*) That the purchase and distribution of the harvest in Belgium shall be under the management of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National, in the same manner as the imported foodstuffs, and that the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National shall continue to administer relief in kind to the destitute, as heretofore, and any regulations entered into or imposed upon the Commission and the Comité National, with regard to their activities, shall be submitted for the approval of His Majesty's Government.

"*b*) With regard to other foodstuffs, not mentioned in General von Bissing's undertaking, no foodstuffs shall be imported into Belgium in substitution for or in replacement of foodstuffs requisitioned from the civil population by the military authorities.

"*c*) Attacks upon the ships engaged upon the work of the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall cease."

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 340

Letter, VON BISSING TO WHITLOCK, *confirming von der Lancken's memorandum*

BRUSSELS, 4 July 1915

His Excellency, Mr. Brand Whitlock

SIR:

I was happy to learn from the letter that Your Excellency was good enough to send me under date of the 3d July last that Your Excellency, as well as His Excellency the Minister of His Majesty the King of Spain and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Netherlands are in accord with the memorandum which, on my orders, Baron von der Lancken had the honor of transmitting to them on the subject of the different arrangements to be arrived at for the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation of Belgium in view of the next harvest and the continuation of the revictualment.

I beg to confirm as follows to Your Excellency the text of this memorandum:

"The Governor General in Belgium will hold at the disposal of the Belgian civil population of the territory placed under his orders the product of the grain harvest of 1915, used for the manufacture of bread (wheat and rye). On its side, the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium under the patronage of the Ministers of Spain, the United States of America, and the Netherlands, will continue to import into Belgium, in about equal monthly quantities until the harvest of 1916, the products necessary for the feeding of the civil population in the territory occupied under the orders of the Governor-General in Belgium.

"As soon as the Governor-General has taken a decision on the subject of the distribution of the 1915 harvest of grain above mentioned, this decision will be brought to the knowledge of the protecting ministers."

After having received Your Excellency's letter I again confirm with satisfaction that the revictualing organization placed under the patronage of the worthy representatives of the three neutral powers, will continue until the harvest of 1916, under the auspices of their governments to assure the ailmentation of the Belgian population.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) Baron von Bissing

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 341

Letter, the Marquis of Crewe to Page, *reviewing the negotiations regarding requisitions and stating the position of the British Government in respect to the German guarantee*

Foreign Office, London
7 July 1915

My Dear Ambassador:

The Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation have been in communication with General von Bissing with a view to obtain from the German authorities in Belgium an undertaking that they will respect the Belgian harvest and will leave that harvest for distribution to the civil population free from all requisitions, seizures, or interference whatsoever on the part of the German civil or military authorities.

I now understand that General von Bissing has consented to give the necessary undertaking as regards the wheat and rye harvest in the territory placed under his jurisdiction, and the Relief Commission has communicated to me the enclosed memorandum to that effect given by General von Bissing to the United States Minister at

Brussels. It would seem, however, that this undertaking is made subject to an assurance on the part of the Commission that it will continue to import regular amounts of foodstuffs into the territory under General von Bissing's jurisdiction in each month until the harvest of 1916, the distribution of the native harvest being conducted *pari passu* with the distribution of such imported foodstuffs. In order that it may be able to fulfil this condition, the Commission asks for an assurance from His Majesty's Government that they will maintain in force the arrangement by which, since last October, permits have from time to time been granted to the Commission, allowing it to import foodstuffs into Belgium, under the guarantee that these foodstuffs shall reach the civil population only.

His Majesty's Government are prepared to give this assurance, but they must give it subject to certain conditions, necessitated by the experience of the last eight months. In order to make the grounds of these conditions clear, I venture to draw attention to the history of the Commission's work.

Under the guarantees agreed to by the Commission, His Majesty's Government originally consented to permit the importation of foodstuffs by it at a time when the approaching scarcity in Belgium could be clearly foreseen, and they did so in the belief that the German Government would at last act with forebearance in face of that scarcity. But, in place of forbearance, the German authorities continued to requisition the native stocks of foodstuffs of all kinds in Belgium until the middle of January, and they not only seized such stocks for the use of the occupying army but exported them to Germany. The extent of the subsequent scarcity was therefore deliberately increased by the German Government and in November His Majesty's Government was obliged to call the attention of the Commission to these requisitions and to warn them that the continuation of such seizures must affect continued imports.

When in the middle of January the German authorities consented to give an undertaking to cease such requisitions and seizures as regards a limited number of articles of food, they continued their unlimited requisitions and seizures of all articles not included in the small list covered by that undertaking, and they now refuse to respect the native produce of even the articles included in that list, except upon conditions. His Majesty's Government must therefore maintain that the German authorities have taken advantage of the foresight and the labours of the Commission to deprive the Belgian people of their native resources.

The German Government have by this action and by the whole attitude they have assumed, shown their determination to divest themselves of all responsibility for the population whose territory they have occupied, and to leave that population to the exclusive care of their own rightful Government, its Allies, and the neutral world. Taking full account of this attitude His Majesty's Government have been obliged to stipulate and now wish to stipulate even more clearly, that the feeding and maintenance of the civil population of Belgium shall be absolutely divided from the feeding and mainte-

nance of the occupying army, and His Majesty's Government have only sanctioned, and will only sanction, the work of the Commission on the distinct understanding that this division is maintained; that is to say, that the Commission gives a complete guarantee that no foodstuffs for which it is responsible go in any way directly or indirectly to any person connected with the occupying army of the German civil administration, and that the relief distributed by it is not in any way taken advantage of by the army or the administration for their own ends. This rigorous distinction must be maintained, and it follows, as a condition precedent to any assurance such as the Commission now asks for, that the Commission and the Comité National shall obtain and continue at all times to enjoy the freedom of action corresponding to their independent responsibility for the feeding and the maintenance of the civil population.

I feel obliged to state these considerations because the German authorities have shown a constant tendency to take action incompatible with this distinction. Particulars have been published in the press throughout the world of the coercive measures adopted by the German authorities at such places as Ghent and Malines, and there are indications that they intend to make such measures part of a general policy of coercion throughout Belgium.

I am not here concerned, and His Majesty's Government are not concerned, with the question whether any particular class of workmen should or should not receive relief, but if the German authorities desire to use the machinery of the Commission and the Comité National for the purpose of coercing the working population of Belgium to employ themselves, against their own will and conscience, directly or indirectly in the service, or for the benefit, of the occupying army, they must themselves provide the relief which those bodies dispense and all arrangements between His Majesty's Government and the Commission must cease.

I trust that the above considerations will render clear the grounds on which His Majesty's Government must make the following stipulations:

1. That the purchase and distribution of the harvest in Belgium shall be under the management of the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National, in the same manner as the imported foodstuffs, and that the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the Comité National shall continue to administer relief in kind to the destitute as heretofore. Any agreement entered into by, and any regulations imposed upon, the Commission or the Comité National with regard to their activities, whether in relation to the harvest or in relation to any other matter, shall be submitted to His Majesty's Government by the Commission for their approval, before the conclusion of such agreement or the acceptance of such regulations.

2. With regard to articles other than wheat and rye, His Majesty's Government cannot of course give any undertaking; and they will not permit the Commission to introduce any such articles into Belgium until an undertaking is given in regard to them by the German

authorities similar to that now given in regard to wheat and rye. As, however, the Commission assures His Majesty's Government that six articles of food which it desires to import will in practice not form the object of requisitions in Belgium, His Majesty's Government are prepared on that understanding to allow the Commission from time to time to import these articles, viz.—peas, beans, rice, bacon, lard, and maize *for human consumption,* so long as the import of these articles does not represent a replacement of other articles requisitioned by the Germans. This permission shall be subject to immediate withdrawal upon determination by His Majesty's Government that the import of these articles does in effect constitute such a replacement.

3. As His Majesty's Government have to complain of constant and flagrant violation by the German Government of their undertaking to respect British ships carrying the Commission's foodstuffs to Rotterdam, they must insist that any further attack made on such vessels shall relieve them from all obligations under the present arrangement.

Subject to these conditions, I hereby give an assurance to the Commission that His Majesty's Government will continue to give permits for the passage of its imports into the territory in Belgium placed under General von Bissing's jurisdiction.

It is of course understood that the present assurances given to the Commission by His Majesty's Government and by the German Government do not supersede, but on the contrary supplement and form an integral part of, the previous assurances and guarantees given by either government.

I am,

Yours sincerely

(Signed) CREWE

DOCUMENT NO. 342

Decree, issued by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, *regarding the seizure of all cereals produced by the harvest of 1915 in the Occupation Zone in Belgium. (Published July 5, 1915)*

BRUSSELS, 30 June 1915

I have decided that all cereals used for the making of bread, and other agricultural products mentioned in Article I arising from this year's harvest, will be exclusively reserved for the provisioning of the population of the country under the General Government. To this end, I wish first of all that all the undermentioned stocks should be seized, according to the instructions of the present Decree. The intention of this seizure is to prevent speculation in the price of bread; besides, this measure will make it possible to re-distribute in equal proportions the wheat and flour, having regard to the needs of the different regions of the country. I hope that the Belgian popu-

lation, and especially the agricultural owners, will prove their good will in facilitating the carrying out of this measure, which is for the country's benefit alone.

ARTICLE I. All cereals (wheat, rye, oats, etc.) used for bread-making, and also the barley intended for the consumption of cattle (and for the breweries) growing in the territory under the Governor-General's command, will be seized for the benefit of the country from the moment they are reaped, whether or not they are mixed with other cereals. The seizure includes straw, and flour (with the leavings) arising from the seized harvest. The seizure of straw falls after threshing.

ARTICLE II. Unless otherwise noted by this present decree, it is forbidden to exchange or otherwise dispose of by agreement or contract any of the seized harvest.

ARTICLE III. The owners of the seized stocks have the right and the obligation to do the work necessary to the preservation of the harvest, and also to proceed with the threshing, etc.

ARTICLE IV. If the owner does not carry out within the time fixed by the Chef d'Arrondissement (head of the district) all work necessary to the preservation of the harvest, the Chef will appoint a third person for such work, at the expense of the owner. The same ruling applies to the work of threshing to be done within the time limit set by the Chef d'Arrondissement.

ARTICLE V. A penalty of five years' imprisonment or a maximum fine of 20,000 marks will be awarded to:

a) Anyone taking, in part or wholly, without authorization, the seized stocks, carrying them outside the communal territory; anyone attempting to spoil or destroy, or without authority transferring or consuming them.

b) Anyone who, without authority, sells or buys, or contracts for, or makes an agreement about the seized stocks with a view to parting with them or purchasing them.

c) Anyone who, contrary to his obligation, does not accomplish the work necessary to the preservation, harvesting, and threshing of the stock within the prescribed time limit.

Any infringement of these rulings will be judged by the military courts.

ARTICLE VI. The seized stocks will be bought and paid for in cash by a Commission which I shall appoint for that purpose, and the stocks will then be placed at the disposal of the population under the General Government.

ARTICLE VII. If it becomes necessary, special steps will be taken to ensure the execution of this decree.

Governor-General in Belgium
BARON VON BISSING
Colonel-General

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 343

Decree, by the GOVERNOR-GENERAL, *concerning methods of handling crop of 1915 in the territory of the General Government*

BRUSSELS, 23 July 1915

DECREE

CONCERNING THE 1915 HARVEST OF BREAD GRAINS IN THE TERRITORY OF THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Article 6 of the Decree of June 30th 1915 (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für Belgien, p. 747 ff.) prescribes:

"The requisitioned grain shall be bought for cash on delivery by a Harvest Commission which I shall form for this purpose and shall be put at the disposal of the population under the General Government."

In partial modification I decree as follows:

1. I assign to the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation the sole right to purchase for cash, the requisitioned stocks and whatever bread grains remain, at a uniform price which I will set.

The requisitions will not be suspended with this purchase.

2. Subject to my control a Central Harvest Commission will be established in Brussels and in each chief town of the Provinces a Harvest Commission for the Province.

3. The Central Harvest Commission shall be subject to my direct control and its president, members, and their regular substitutes shall be chosen by me. The president will be a delegate of the General Government.

As members of the Commission I shall appoint a representative:

a) From the Civil Administration, to be at the same time vice president.
b) From the Political Department.
c) From the Commission on Banks.
d) From the Commissariat of the General Government.
e) From the Comité National.
f) From the Commission for Relief.

In a parity of votes the president shall have the casting vote. The president has the right to summon experts in a consultative capacity to the meetings.

The language of the deliberations shall be German.

4. The Provincial Harvest Commission shall be composed of:

a) The president of the local Civil Administration or his representative to sit as president.
b) Two officers or officials, members of the Economic Commission of the Province.
c) A member of the Députation Permanente.
d) A representative of the grain trade of the Province.
e) An agricultural representative of the Province.

The members designated under *c*) to *e*) shall not at the same time be members of the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

The members of the Commission and their regular substitutes shall be nominated by the Governor of the Province.

In a parity of votes the president shall have the casting vote.

The president shall have the right to call to the meetings experts in a consultative capacity. The president has the right to oppose decisions of the Commission and to appeal to me for decisions through the mediation of the chief of administration and the Central Harvest Commission.

5. The Central Harvest Commission shall determine what quantities are from time to time to be released from requisition and put at the disposal of the population.

It shall supervise the supplying of the Belgian population with bread and is especially to take care that after deducting the stocks to be reserved for sowing, the monthly consumption does not exceed more than one-twelfth part of the entire Belgian bread-grain harvest of 1915.

It will furthermore submit to me the suggestions in respect of the uniform ration per capita of population, purchasing price of threshed bread grains, milling, and the maximum prices for the sale of threshed bread grains, flour, bran, and bread.

The Central Harvest Commission will supply the Provincial Harvest Commission through the intermediary of the chief of administration with instructions—in the case of important questions of policy after having obtained my decision in advance—and supervises their execution.

6. Each Provincial Harvest Commission is responsible for the monthly distribution of the bread grains to the Comité National. The distribution will be based on statistics to be gathered and kept up to date by the Commission. It will supervise the stocks in the Province and those sent in from other Provinces, control the fixed purchase prices and in general all operations of the special office which the Comité National will establish in each Province for the purchase and the distribution of the indigenous harvest.

The Commission has power to give instructions to this effect to the Belgian Communes. The rights and obligations of the Députation Permanente according to articles 121, 133, and 147 of the communal law, are, for this purpose, transferred to the president of the Provincial Harvest Commission.

7. Infraction of the regulations and mandates of this decree shall be punishable by imprisonment of not longer than 5 years, or by a fine not exceeding 20,000 Mks.; the two penalties may be exacted at one time.

The German Military Courts are the competent tribunals.

Penalties ordained by Article 5, of the Decree of June 30, 1915 (Gesetz- und Verordnungsblatt für die okkupierten Gebiete Belgiens pp. 747–55) remain in force.

8. The present decree does not apply to barley.

9. I reserve the right to make alterations in the present decree.

Governor-General in Belgium
Baron von Bissing
Colonel-General

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 344

Letter, WHITLOCK TO VON DER LANCKEN, *reviewing the negotiations and setting forth the British point of view and the understanding that had been reached*

BRUSSELS, 16 July 1915

To His Excellency, Baron von der Lancken, Brussels

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

My colleague, the Minister of Spain, and I have communicated to His British Majesty's Government, the memorandum which the Governor-General of Belgium, Baron von Bissing, handed to us under date June 26th, and which covers the discussions which we have had on the subjects of the harvest of 1915 and the provisioning of Belgium.

I am happy to learn, and I am pleased to inform you, that the British Government has promised to allow and facilitate the import into Belgium until the harvest of 1916, of the foodstuffs necessary to the provisioning of the civil population of Belgium, under the conditions, the principles of which we have already had the pleasure of agreeing upon with Your Excellency, partly by exchange of correspondence and memoranda, and partly in the course of conferences which we have held with Your Excellency, my colleague, the Minister of Spain, and myself. It will be, I am sure, quite as agreeable for us to come to terms over the details of the execution of these conditions.

We have indeed many times, in the course of our discussions, admitted the following principles, which I am glad to say are the same as those to which the British Government refers:

1. That the feeding and upkeep of the Belgian civil population shall be maintained entirely separate from the feeding and upkeep of the German Army, and that under these conditions, none of the imported provisions, as also none of the cereals (wheat, rye, winter barley, maslin), which according to the decision of the Governor-General are to be reserved entirely for the use of the civil population, will go either directly or indirectly to any person attached to the German Army or the German civil administration, and will not be bought for the purpose of export;

That the Belgian population alone will receive advantage of the Secours which the Comité National will distribute;

That the Comité National and the C.R.B. will continue to enjoy at all times a liberty of action in accordance with their mission and their responsibilities in provisioning and giving assistance to the Belgian civil population who are in need;

That the German authorities will at no time employ the Comité National nor the C.R.B. as a means to force the population of working people, against their will and against their conscience, to employment either directly or indirectly benefiting the German Imperial Army.

2. That the purchase and distribution of the harvest of cereals will be made in Belgium by the C.N. in the same way as for the imported foodstuffs, and that the C.N. also with the co-operation of

the C.R.B. will continue to distribute help in kind to the needy as before.

The British Government has informed us, however, that they will regretfully be compelled to withdraw permission to the boats loaded with provisions for Belgium if, contrary to the intentions declared by Your Excellency, English boats carrying relief goods to Rotterdam are attacked.

I am also informed that the British Government will be disposed to facilitate the import into Belgium of other commodities besides wheat, rye, winter barley, and maslin, if your Government will give, on the subject of these articles also, the same guarantee as that given for the cereals.

The British Government has, however, declared that it will authorize the import of the following six articles besides the cereals, viz.: peas, beans, rice, bacon, lard, and maize for human consumption, as long as the import of these articles does not represent a replacement of articles requisitioned by the authorities under your orders.

It is not necessary to add that if Your Excellency wishes, for any reason, to bring some modifications to the plan suggested above, either in the form of rules or orders, or in some other way, making them as suggestions to the C.N. or the C.R.B., these alterations will at once be communicated to the Government of Britain through the intermediary of the Government which I have the honor to represent.

I have no doubt that Your Excellency will be good enough to signify your agreement with the above, and that you will at the same time confirm, in the name of your Government, as the British Government has done, the assurances and guarantees given formerly, and which are included with the stipulations above cited.

I take this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) BRAND WHITLOCK

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 345

Letter, VON DER LANCKEN TO VILLALOBAR,[30] *stating the understanding of the German authorities concerning the guarantees*

BRUSSELS, 29 July 1915

YOUR EXCELLENCY:

I have had the honor of receiving the letter which Your Excellency was pleased to transmit to me under date of July 16, 1915 concerning the revictualing of Belgium by the Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation.

I was happy to learn that, as a result of the measures which Your Excellency, as well as His Excellency the Minister of the United

[30] An identical letter was addressed to Whitlock and appears as Document 40, chapter ii. This important general guarantee is given in the original language in chapter xvii.

States had been so kind as to undertake, the British Government has pledged itself to facilitate until the harvest of 1916 the importation into Belgium of the products necessary for the feeding of the Belgian civil population within the conditions upon the principle of which I have already had the pleasure of placing myself in accord with Your Excellency.

I have already had the occasion to make known to Your Excellency that the Governor-General has declared himself agreed in principle that the work of revictualing of Belgium continue exactly, for the benefit of the population of that country, under the conditions which were formulated through the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the representatives of the neutral Powers.

As to the details of these agreements I am glad to be able to inform Your Excellency that the Governor-General admits the following principles, which, I am sure, are the same as those admitted by Your Excellency, to wit:

That the feeding and support of the Belgian civil population must continue to be separated from the feeding and support of the German Army, and that the decisions made in this sense by the Governor-General in accord with the protecting ministers [MM. les Protecteurs] shall be carried out in all respects.

That the Belgian population alone shall derive benefit from the aid which is distributed by the Comité National.

That the Comité National and the Commission for Relief in Belgium shall be able to enjoy all liberty of action necessary for them to be in a position to fulfil the mission which has devolved upon them through the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the representatives of the neutral Powers.

That the Governor-General shall never make use of the Comité National to force the Belgian population to employ itself in the service of the German Army contrary to the stipulations of the Hague conventions.

That the Comité National shall be the intermediary in the purchase of the harvest of grains in the territory placed under the orders of the Governor-General in Belgium, and that the distribution of these grains shall be done through the care of the said Comité in the same manner as the distributions of the imported goods; that likewise the Comité shall continue to distribute help in kind to the needy under the conditions determined by the previous agreements made between the Governor-General and the protecting ministers.

I have taken note of the communication of Your Excellency that the British Government will facilitate, in addition to the importation of grains, the importation likewise of peas, bacon, beans, rice, lard, and maize for human consumption, as long as the importation of these articles does not represent the replacing of other articles requisitioned by order of the Governor-General.

I have likewise taken note that Your Excellency will cause to be communicated to the British Government the modifications which might be brought by the Governor-General to the ensemble of the regulations decided upon by the agreements entered into between the Governor-General and the protecting ministers.

In conformity with the request which Your Excellency is pleased

to make of me in his letter, I have the honor, in the name of the Governor-General, to confirm to Your Excellency the assurances and guarantees previously given and which are specified in the preceding stipulations.

I have communicated to the Governor-General the assurance which Your Excellency was pleased to give me, that the work patronized by Your Excellency shall continue to exercise its beneficent action under the conditions of strict neutrality justifying the aid and the protection which the Governor-General and the authorities placed under his orders have not ceased to bring to this institution since its creation.

The Governor-General is happy to state that the renewed assurance to this effect which Your Excellency has been pleased to give, constitutes for him a guarantee that the humanitarian purpose of this work can be pursued without injury to the rights which accrue to the occupant of the country, and to the interests of which he has charge.

I embrace this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my deep consideration.

(Signed) LANCKEN

[*Translation*]

The Foreign Office communication of the 7th July[31] and von der Lancken's undertakings of the 29th July[32] which assured the continuance of Allied finance and the protection of the harvest in the Occupation Zone provided the basis for the Commission's work during the second winter of the war.

The Governor-General's decree[33] dated the 23rd July created the Central Crop Commission to put into effect the arrangements regarding native bread grains which had been agreed upon between the relief organization and the Germans. It is particularly to be noted that this decree provided that the Comité National should have the exclusive right to purchase the new crop and the remainder of any stocks from previous harvests. Though there was some confusion in the early months, by November 1915 the monthly issues of one-fifteenth of the total crop estimated at 202,000 tons became available. Thus the Commission, in making its program of necessary imports, could count each month upon 13,450 tons of native wheat out of the 1915 harvest. Important as this contribution was, the Commission had to import four times this amount, i.e., 54,000 tons each month, to maintain the bread ration in Belgium.

[31] Document 341.

[32] Document 345.

[33] Document 343. Given also in original language in chapter xvii.

By a similar decree dated the 20th July the Governor-General had created a Barley Commission to control the small but important crop of this grain. The Commission included representatives of the Belgian Brewers' Federation and Yeast Manufacturers, but was without Comité National representation.

The decrees relating to the establishment of the Central Crop Commission and the Barley Commission are especially interesting because they mark the beginning of a policy which the Germans later greatly extended in dealing with many other articles of Belgian production. They were the first examples of the "centrales" which the Germans created to centralize and control existing stocks of any article when a shortage threatened. Thus there came to be in Belgium an oil centrale, a butter centrale, a sugar centrale, a potato centrale, a vegetable centrale, and a chicory centrale. Except for a few of the centrales, this system of control was not a success in Belgium. The Central Crop Commission controlling bread grains was the conspicuous success and this may be attributed largely to the fact that the relief organization and the Belgians themselves played such a large part in its administration. Other centrales managed exclusively by the Germans appear to have done considerably more harm than good. The potato centrale, for example, dissipated and exhausted the 1916 crop months before the new crop was in. The main trouble, of course, was that the centrale system, where it was without Belgian representation, was a system imposed by a military government on a people whose spirit was unconquered.

3. *The Extension of Protection of Native Produce July 1915–March 1918*

On an entirely different basis from the decree relating to bread grains were the two issued about the same time covering the extremely important question of fodder. Wheat, rye, and barley were reserved for the use of the civil population, but oats and hay were requisitioned for the benefit of the German Army, though in each case the producers were allowed to retain limited quantities for the upkeep of the animal stock. It is obvious that since the maintenance of meat, fat, and milk supplies depended on fodder, the fodder

question was closely related to that of local food supplies. As has already been stated, Belgium was normally a large importer of fodder materials, and the announced policy of the Germans in reference to native supplies soon raised a new issue in the work of the Commission.

DOCUMENT NO. 346

Order, by GOVERNOR-GENERAL, *concerning the seizure of the oat crop of 1915 in the Occupation Zone*

BRUSSELS, 27 July 1915

ARTICLE 1. The oat harvest for 1915 in the domain of the Government General is seized for the administration of the army, at its removal from the soil. This seizure applies equally to the stalk. After threshing the straw is free from all seizure.

Every holder of an agricultural estate, and every buyer of growing oats, is obliged to see that the harvest is properly gathered in.

ARTICLE 2. Unless otherwise decided hereafter:

1. The oats seized cannot undergo any modification.

2. No disposition can be made in favor of a third person, by agreement or contract.

Among other things the following are considered as among the dispositions:

Purchase, sale, hypothecation, donations, loans.

ARTICLE 3. Every owner of an agricultural holding in the domain of the Government General in Belgium having produced oats during the year 1915 or every other proprietor of oats of the 1915 harvest, must take all the necessary steps for the conservation of the stocks seized, including threshing and treating the oats with all the care of a good farmer.

He is obliged:

a) To sell to the administration of the army on demand, all oats, except seed and forage designated in 6*a* and 6*b*; to cart it, to deliver it, and to unload it in its due time.

b) To accord to the delegates of the administration of the army free access to all places on his property in order to be able to execute their duty, to submit to them business books, if they possess any, and to furnish them with all details and directions as to where the oats harvested on his property are stored.

ARTICLE 4. Every owner or proprietor of an agricultural holding is forbidden to:

a) Feed his cattle with oats suitable for sowing;

b) Transport oats without safe-conduct of the administration of the army, with the exception of the movements from the field to the barn, from the barn to the thresher, and from the latter back to the barn.

ARTICLE 5. Should any proprietor or owner of holdings omit to perform the acts required by Article 3, paragraphs I and II, within a period fixed by the administration of the army, the latter will have

them performed by third parties at the expense of the owner or proprietor.

ARTICLE 6. The following will be free from seizure in favor of the owner or proprietor of agricultural holdings:

a) At the time of sowing, for each hectare of the surface cultivated by him during the year 1915, 170 kilos of seed oats of first quality and harvested by the owner in question.

b) At the time of the need of forage, for each day and each horse in the possession of the owner, 2,500 grams of oats, or in round figures 920 kilos of oats for each horse for each year.

By "Year" is understood the period from September 1st, 1915, to August 31st, 1916.

For each horse which is not the property of an agricultural owner of holdings producing oats, the administration will allow from seizure an annual quantity of 920 kilos of oats in round figures, to be purchased from the producers. On the demand of the chief of district, the rates indicated above can be augmented by the administration of the army for urgent cases and for the horses employed in mines, which shall have first consideration.

ARTICLE 7. The administration of the army fixes a price of Frs. 33 for each 100 kilos of good quality oats, at current prices taken by the administration and brought to it in good time at the place indicated by it and weighing at least 44 kilos per hectolitre. The administration of the army will fix the price of oats of minor quality on the basis of advices which will be furnished by experts.

ARTICLE 8. Whoever contravenes Article 1, paragraph 2, and Articles 2, 3, and 4 of the present decree will be punished with imprisonment up to five years or with a fine up to Frs. 20,000.

The two punishments can be inflicted simultaneously. At this same time, a contravention in the cases noted in Articles 2, 3*a*, or 4*b* may occasion a withdrawal of the allowance of oats, in favor of the administration of the army.

ARTICLE 9. The judgments are to be delivered by the German Military Courts.

ARTICLE 10. The execution of these judgments, and the method of execution is reserved to the Military Administration.

Governor-General in Belgium
BARON VON BISSING
Colonel-General

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 347

Order, by GOVERNOR-GENERAL, *concerning the requisitioning of the hay crop of 1915 in the Occupation Zone*

BRUSSELS, 6 August 1915

ARTICLE 1. The entire crop of grass and clover hay of the 1915 harvest, first crop as well as second crop, is requisitioned for the army administration from the moment it is cut.

Any farmer or other owner of a hay crop, whether grass hay or clover hay, is bound to see that the harvesting of the hay is properly carried out.

ARTICLE 2. As far as it is not otherwise decreed below, no hay may be disposed of in favor of a third person either by contract or sale. Under the above head come purchase, sale, mortgage, donation, or loan.

ARTICLE 3. Every farmer, or other owner of a hay crop in the Belgian territory under the General Government, is bound to take all necessary measures for the preservation of the requisitioned stocks, and in general is to treat the crops with the care of a good manager. He shall:

a) On request sell to the representative of the army administration such hay except that designated in Article 6, gather, deliver, and load it;

b) Accord to the representative of the army administration entrance to all parts of his estate for the execution of his duty, present for his examination all business books, and otherwise give him details of such hay crop as is grown on his premises.

ARTICLE 4. All farmers or other owners of the hay crop of 1915 are forbidden to transport or move the hay without a special safe-conduct from the administration, except as from the fields to the barns.

ARTICLE 5. Should any farmer or other owner of a hay crop of 1915 not carry out such orders as are given in Article 1, paragraph 2, and Article 3, paragraphs 1 and 2*a*, within the prescribed time, the army administration will have the work done by a third party at the cost of the owner.

ARTICLE 6. Such hay as the farmer requires for the feeding of his own cattle shall be free from requisition.

ARTICLE 7. The administration will purchase at the maximum price fixed for individual provinces in which the hay is delivered, such hay as is delivered in good quality and within the prescribed time at a place fixed by the administration.

ARTICLE 8. Any infraction of the rules laid down in Article 1, paragraph 2, Articles 2, 3, or 4 of this decree, will be punished by imprisonment not longer than five years, or a fine up to 20,000 francs. Both punishments may be ordered together. At the same time an infringement of Articles 2, 3*a*, or 4 can be punished by a withdrawal of the hay allowed to the proprietor in favor of the administration.

ARTICLE 9. Judgment for these punishments is made by the German military courts.

ARTICLE 10. The execution of measures of punishment is reserved.

Governor-General in Belgium
BARON VON BISSING
Colonel-General

[*Translation*]

These two German decrees regarding fodder were not altogether satisfactory to the British Foreign Office, and

when the Commission began to work out its program of imports for the coming winter it encountered new British restrictions. Heretofore the Commission had been practically free to import supplies in such quantities and of such character as the situation required or finances would allow. Hereafter, however, the Foreign Office scrutinized the relief program in detail and authorized only such items as it approved. Some commodities were eliminated, others were permitted in specified quantities. As early as August 1915 Hoover was instructed to cease the importation of maize, which could be used for both food and fodder. This temporary restriction was cancelled, however, on condition that the maize was distributed for human consumption and that none was imported specifically for fodder.

DOCUMENT NO. 348

Extract of letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *describing the fodder situation in the Occupation Zone and stating the necessity of importation in order that the Belgians may keep their cattle*

LONDON, 11 October 1915

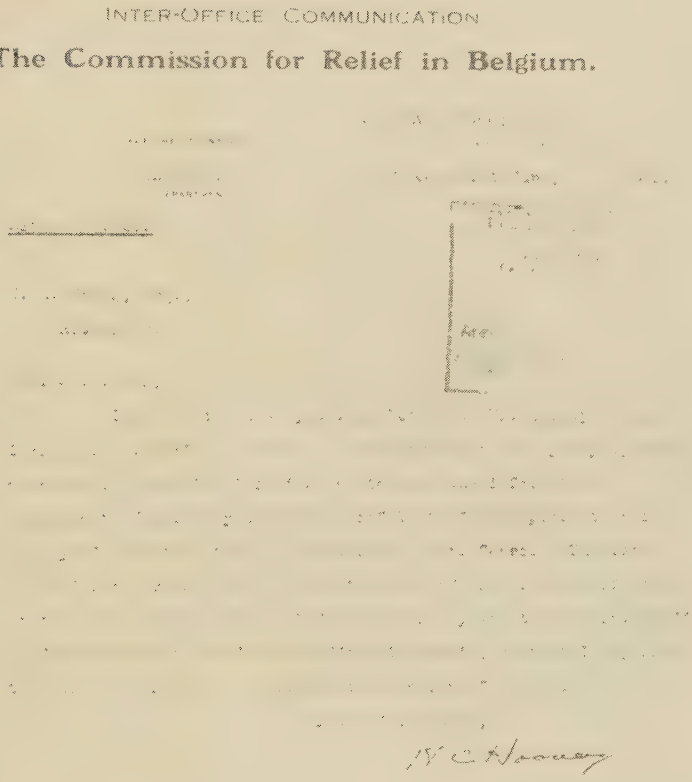
Lord Eustace Percy, Foreign Office

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

. . . . . .

FODDER IN THE OCCUPATION ZONE

Aside from instructions from General von Bissing to the local Kommandaturen that they are to carry out his previous decree in the spirit, i.e., reserve an adequate provision of all the hay crops for the local people, nothing further has been accomplished. The rye crop in the Occupation Zone is of course reserved to the civil population; the oat crop has been largely removed. They do not seem to be anxious for hay, and in fact there is no great amount of it in the country, beyond the requirements of the actual producers, who have the first call on it. My feeling is that the situation is as good as it can be made in this particular; or, to put it the other way, that the Germans have already taken as much material as will be available to them. On the other hand, Belgium never has provided home-grown fodder for her town animals and the amount of maize which we are importing is totally inadequate to keep these animals going. The Belgians are extremely anxious for the right for us to ship in the refuse from the Dutch sugar refineries and linseed cake from the Dutch linseed-oil mills, as these have been standard sources of fodder. I feel very strongly that this should be done at once because


INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

The Commission for Relief in Belgium.

LETTER, 1 JUNE 1915, HOOVER TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMISSION'S ROTTERDAM OFFICE

under the present stress of shortage of fodder the Belgians are freely selling their cattle to the Germans as they are not able to feed them.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 349

Extract of letter, PERCY TO HONNOLD, *authorizing the importation of specific amounts of fodder materials into the Occupation Zone*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON,
21 October 1915

DEAR MR. HONNOLD:

. . . . . .

As regards fodder, we are now prepared to authorise you to resume importations of maize, linseed cake, and sugar refuse into Belgium. As to amounts, Mr. Hoover's letter states twenty thousand to thirty thousand tons of maize a month as a maximum. The Commission's report dated August 31st states the amount of maize to be imported as twenty thousand tons a month, and this was confirmed by Mr. Crosby's letter, Executive File No. 390, of August 20th. I had taken this amount to be the fixed maximum for the purposes of point 6 of the conditions laid down in Sir E. Grey's letter to Mr. Page of July 17th, and pending further discussion I do not think that this maximum of twenty thousand tons a month should be exceeded.

As regards the amount of linseed cake to be imported, this should not exceed ten thousand tons a month for the present, and we shall expect the Commission to fix a maximum for sugar refuse also.

The above authorisation is given in consideration of the guarantees given by Mr. Hoover as to the system of distribution adopted by the Section Agricole, and it is understood that the Section Agricole[34] will have control over any fodder imported into the Etappengebiet, equally with that imported into the zone of occupation. The continued authorisation will, however, depend on the Germans refraining from all requisitions or purchases of live stock in both zones, and on no live stock being sold to the German Army or exported to Germany. On receipt of any information that these conditions are not being complied with, or that the Germans are taking advantage of this fodder to pasture their cattle in Belgium, the present authorisation will be immediately withdrawn.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

There followed a series of program curtailments by the Foreign Office, which were imposed at one time or another

[34] A branch of the provisioning department of the Relief organization created to supply seed and fodder to the peasantry.

throughout the winter and the spring of 1916. Reports, frequently exaggerated, of German activities, particularly the export of Belgian cattle to Germany, which reached the Foreign Office through its own intelligence service, strengthened the opposition to relief which existed in military circles and brought more restrictions on the C.R.B. On the 16th December 1915[35] the British instructed the Commission to restrict importations drastically and to eliminate entirely the bacon and lard items in its program for Belgium. A new crisis for the Commission came in early January 1916, when the Foreign Office informed Hoover that because of reported leakages of relief supplies into Germany, further restrictions on importations must be made immediately and the whole relief might be stopped. Several questions were involved in this crisis. The Foreign Office insisted that the Commission was solely responsible for the fulfillment of the guarantees by the Germans and doubted the ability of the Commission to discharge this responsibility with the limited number of Americans then permitted in Belgium.[36] The negotiations relating to the reorganization of this distribution and inspection machinery in Belgium to meet British objections are covered by documents in a preceding chapter.[37] In the course of these negotiations the Commission obtained two vastly important results in the spring of 1916: first, an all-inclusive guarantee from the Germans covering all products of Belgian soil;[38] and second, a reorganization of the Commission's control of distribution in Belgium through the strengthening of the Department of Inspection and Control.[39] It was not until these arrangements had been completed that the Foreign Office, in the spring of 1916, relaxed the restrictions on importations.[40] The all-inclusive guarantee, mentioned above, extended the principle of protection of Belgian products from requisition to the prohibition of ". . . . the exportation from the territory of the General Government of foodstuffs (including animals), produce, and fodder, serving

[35] See Documents 70–74, chapter iii.

[36] See Document 33, chapter ii.

[37] Chapter ii, Documents 46–63.

[38] Document 83, chapter iii, is an English translation of this important guarantee of the 14th April 1916. See chapter xvii for text in original language.

[39] See Documents 51 and 52, chapter ii.

[40] See Documents 84 and 85, chapter iii.

for human alimentation and animals. . . ." and ". . . . the exportation from said territory of seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural supplies. . . ." The precedent established was never challenged, and in the following years it was merely a matter of working out the details for the control of the harvest in the Occupation Zone. The following documents cover the principal crop decrees of 1916, 1917, and 1918.

DOCUMENT NO. 350

Decree, by Governor-General, *concerning the bread grain harvest of 1916 in the Occupation Zone*

Brussels, 8 July 1916

Official Bulletin of Decrees for the Occupied Territory of Belgium

No. 235

I

Decree in Regard to the Cancellation of Earlier Harvest Regulations

The following Decrees are hereby annulled: Laws and Decrees S. 671, dated 5/6/1915; do., S. 747, 11/7/1915; do., S. 778, 23/7/1915; and the supplementary regulations of 30/7/1915; do., 10/8/1915 and the notice of the same date; do., 968, of 28/8/1915; the notices of September 10th; the Decrees of September 24th, October 9th, and December 18th, 1915, of January 22d, 1916, February, 29th, and April 1st; the notice of May 31st (page 2248). For punishable offences the old laws remain in force for the offences committed before the publication of this Decree. The same applies to the distribution of the 1915 harvest for personal consumption or for the feeding of cattle.

The Decree of May 16th, 1916 ("Official Bulletin," page 2158), concerning the purchase of stocks still remaining, continues in force.

II

Decree Concerning the Requisition of Bread Cereals

Article 1. Cereals of all kinds (such as rye, wheat, or barley) which can be used in making bread, and to be harvested in the territory of the General Government in 1916, are, by this present Decree, requisitioned for the use of the civil population under the abovementioned government from the moment that these cereals are reaped, and without considering whether they are or are not mixed with other cereals. The seizure extends also to flour and to the products of the bakeries and confectioneries arising from the seized cereals. The seizure of straw is raised after the threshing, and that of bran is raised after the wheat is milled.

The requisition extends also to the cereals and the flour arising

from the previous harvests, especially to those quantities which were destined for the personal consumption of the producer or for the feeding of his cattle and which have not been used for these purposes.

ARTICLE 2. Except in so far as the present Decree shall decide otherwise, it is forbidden to change the requisitioned stocks or to dispose of any of them by sale or contract or agreement.

ARTICLE 3. The holders of the requisitioned stocks have the right and obligation to execute all work necessary to the due preservation of the produce; they have the right and obligation to proceed with the threshing. They are ordered to declare the stocks according to the exact truth.

ARTICLE 4. If the holders do not execute, within the time allowed for this purpose by the competent authorities, such work as is necessary for the due preservation of their stocks, these authorities can cause the work in question to be done by a third party at the cost of the holder of the stock. The same applies to all holders who do not proceed to the threshing within the time prescribed by the Provincial Harvest Commission.

ARTICLE 5. (*a*) Whoever, without being authorized, shall remove, or cause to be removed from the commune, the requisitioned stock; whoever shall destroy, spoil, or hide, or without authorization, shall transform or consume them;

b) Whoever, without authorization, shall sell or purchase these stocks, or without authorization shall make an agreement of any kind with a view to disposing of or acquiring them;

c) Whoever shall have infringed the obligations which are imposed by Article 3 of this Decree, shall be punished by an imprisonment of not exceeding five years, or a fine which can extend to marks 20,000, besides which, the stocks which were the cause of the violation of obligations can be declared confiscated.

The commandants and military tribunals are competent to judge as to infractions under the present Decree.

ARTICLE 6. The requisitioned stocks shall be purchased for cash and put at the disposal of the population under the General Government in the form of bread, flour, and bran. The use of the requisitioned quantities of these cereals for other purposes than that of bread-making will be submitted to the consideration of the Central Harvest Commission, which will make a decision for each particular case.

ARTICLE 7. The Comité National de Secours et d'Alimentation has the exclusive right to make these purchases of the requisitioned stocks arising from the harvests of 1916, as well as the remains of stocks arising from previous harvests which have not been entirely used up; the purchase will be made at a uniform price which I shall fix in due course. This purchase does not, however, put an end to the requisition.

ARTICLE 8. If it is necessary, I shall order that a part of the seized cereals, at most 10,000 tons, shall be distributed to the persons I shall designate to that end, for the purpose of the manufacture of malt to be used as a substitute for coffee.

ARTICLE 9. Further regulations may be published with a view to facilitating the execution of this present Decree.

The Governor-General in Belgium
BARON VON BISSING
Colonel-General

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 351

Order, issued by GOVERNOR-GENERAL VON FALKENHAUSEN, *covering 1917 crop in Belgium*

BRUSSELS, 13 November 1917

His Excellency, The Marquis de Villalobar

MARQUIS:

Following upon our conversation of yesterday, I send you a note giving a résumé of an order which the Governor-General has sent out to all authorities, both in Brussels and the provinces, to again remind them of existing agreements and to insist on their strict observance. This measure has been taken particularly with regard to the drawbacks to the observance of these agreements presented by the somewhat frequent movements of officers and officials in the provinces. I trust it meets your ideas.

At the same time, and in reference to this order, the various central departments interested have repeated to their subordinates in the provinces detailed instructions regarding the application of the various clauses of the agreements and the measures to be taken to avoid the repetition of such contraventions as may be eventually brought to light.

I trust that these measures will help to dispel the apprehensions which you may have felt regarding the very firm intention of the Governor-General to have respected by the authorities under his orders the undertakings which he has given.

Please accept, etc.,

(Signed) RIETH

NOTICE

A new order of the Governor-General with regard to the relief work has just been issued to the authorities, both military and civil, of the territory placed under his orders. This order again summarizes the undertakings given by the Governor-General to the Protecting Ministers.

In this order the Governor-General again categorically requires that the agreements made should be respected to the letter, and states that he is determined to punish with the greatest severity those who disobey orders relating thereto. He commands that all communications from the Protecting Ministers or from the C.H.N.[41] acting in their name, should be carefully examined into and without loss of time; that the result of inquiries, and—if proof of a contravention

[41] Comité Hispano-Néerlandais.

shall have been obtained—the punishment inflicted should be immediately brought to the knowledge of the V.C.N.[42] Lastly, the Governor-General commands that suitable measures for the prevention of such acts should be taken in case of need.

Furthermore, the Governor-General expects from the authorities under his orders that any action or measure which might be interpreted as a failure on his part to keep his word should be first of all submitted to his decision.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO 352

Declaration, of VON FALKENHAUSEN, *to the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais with regard to the guarantees*

BRUSSELS, 8 March 1918

I have ordered the minute examination of the special points in question. The examination has been in part carried out and I have instructed the head of my Political Department to inform your Excellencies of the result. On several points, not very numerous, the examination still continues, but I am in a position to state generally —and I am very pleased to have the opportunity—that from now I shall take care to give my special attention to the strict accomplishment of the engagements which my predecessors have taken with the Ministers of the Neutral States.

[*Translation*]

PART II. THE ARMY ZONES

The preceding documents in this chapter relate only to the protection of native products in the Occupation Zone, i.e., that part of Belgium under the jurisdiction of the German General Government in Brussels. Negotiations of a different character but of equal importance were carried on concurrently regarding the local crops in the Army Zones, which included East and West Flanders (usually referred to as the Belgian Etapes) and Northern France.[43] In the Army Zones,

[42] Vermittlungsstelle Comité National, a department of the German General Government at Brussels set up to deal with relief matters. See chapter ii, Document 45.

[43] The Commission in its operations necessarily maintained a distinction between Belgium and France not only because of the difference in nationality, but because of the different sources of funds. A similar distinction was observed by the British Foreign Office. The Germans, however, ignored the national distinction in their administrative system, cutting off East and West Flanders from Belgium and including the provinces in the zone of the armies along with the French regions under their control.

as has been said, the Commission negotiated directly with the army commands wholly outside the channels of diplomacy, and the requisition and distribution of local supplies were carried out by the six separate army commands without a central organization as in Belgium. In general the Commission had satisfactory dealings with the army, whose decisions were prompt and efficiently carried out. The Germans were jealous of their authority and never allowed negotiations to take the form of bargaining. The Commission made the best of this situation, presenting its case and its specific desires informally. Many minor guarantees were merely verbal assurances of competent military authorities to the Commission's representative; others were in the form of army decrees which were always issued as decisions of the Command with no suggestion that they originated in requests from the Commission. Obviously much of the success in these relations depended on the tact and ability of the American representatives in Northern France and in this the Commission was very fortunate. On one or two occasions, notably during the deportations incident,[44] relations were strained, but the influence of the Americans was always sufficient to enable the Commission to discharge its heavy responsibilities without a break.

4. *The Belgian Etapes. September–October 1915*

Coincidently with its operations in the Occupation Zone of Belgium in 1914 and 1915, the Commission had extended its relief to the Belgian Etapes (East and West Flanders), where it had secured without difficulty from the military authorities an extension of all important guarantees with respect to imported commodities. As has been noted, however, the crop guarantees for the Occupation Zone did not apply to these regions, and when the army command announced its program the British Foreign Office objected and warned Hoover that unless he could secure concessions from the Germans, further imports into the Belgian Etapes would be prohibited. The documents which immediately follow show the negotiations with the army representatives which secured the concessions acceptable to the British.

[44] See chapter x.

DOCUMENT NO. 353

Letter, Hoover to Crosby, *regarding the requisitioning of crops in the Belgian Etapes, East and West Flanders*

Brussels, 14 September 1915

Oscar T. Crosby, Esq.,
Director, C.R.B., Brussels

Dear Mr. Crosby:

Belgian Population in the Operations Zone,
East and West Flanders

I understand that the German authorities in this section are requisitioning the entire harvest and that they are intending to set aside out of the harvest for the civilian population an amount of wheat which will come to 120 grams per capita per diem during the the next year and that no provision has been made for the reservation to the population of fodder for their animals. The blockading governments have formally called our attention to this position and informed us that as they considered it the duty of the occupying army to set aside from the harvest complete provision for the civil population and their animals in the first instance, and that as no provision has been made for animals and only part for humans in this region, they cannot allow us to continue imports into that section. They contend that such imports amount to provisioning the German Army by virtue of replacement of foodstuffs which have been requisitioned from the population. Whether these contentions are right or wrong, the fact stares us in the face that the ravitaillement of this section is in danger of breaking down.

I shall be glad if you would at once take this question up with the German General Staff and represent to them the difficulty we are in and our desire to see this service proceed smoothly on all sides in the interest of the civilian population—represent to them the extreme difficulty of our position standing between such conflicting interests and the hope we have in an accommodation on their part which will enable us to solve this very trying situation.

As a constructive suggestion, I have hopes that I could settle the position if the German authorities would agree to hand over the entire wheat harvest at the cost to them, to the civil population, and if they would make sufficient reservation from the rye, oats, hay, and other fodder crops to support the animals during the winter. Such an arrangement being of course contingent on our securing the undertaking that we will be free from interference in the import of the large amount of foodstuffs which will be necessary to support the population.

I trust you will take this matter up as quickly as possible because our shipments into this section are at once imperiled.

Yours very truly

Herbert Hoover, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 354

Letter, CROSBY TO COUNT WENGERSKY,[45] *suggesting further reservations of the food and fodder crops in the Belgian Etapes for the local population*

BRUSSELS, 14 September 1915

DEAR COUNT WENGERSKY:

You will please find enclosed two letters from Mr. Hoover, indicating certain very important difficulties which the Commission is in with respect to the Etappen in Flanders and the North of France. The latter is completely explained in Mr. Hoover's letter, but with regard to Flanders I would like to amplify Mr. Hoover's suggestion that the entire wheat harvest in East and West Flanders should be turned over to the civil population and that provision should be made for the animals.

It appears that the whole wheat harvest in the Etappen of East and West Flanders will only amount to about 120,000 tons, while the provision of 120 grams per diem per capita now being reserved to the population will absorb about 70,000 or 80,000 tons. Therefore at best the German authorities will only secure 40,000 or 50,000 tons of wheat. I have no doubt therefore it was the intention to turn it all over, but there is this difference in the German determination and Mr. Hoover's proposal: that his proposal puts an infinitely better color upon the position and gives him a much better footing for negotiation. If the wheat were all turned over, as Mr. Hoover suggests, we would still have to import 100,000 tons of wheat into that section, besides the large amounts of rice, bacon, lard, etc. . . . .

So far as the animal foods are concerned, the present situation is now one perhaps more of fear than of actual distress as to the taking of the fodder. There is no certainty in the minds of the producers whether or not the cattle can be kept through the winter. I believe of course that the German authorities will provide fodder, and it would relieve the whole situation if they would declare a reservation out of the rye, oats, hay, etc., which would protect the animals. It would relieve the fears of the people and also enable us to settle our future.

These suggestions are, I believe, in line with the intentions of the authorities, and if they could be expressed by further decree, they will have secured to the population a quantity of foodstuffs amounting to a considerably greater value than the amount set out for them above by virtue of our imports.

I trust I am not over-insistent if I ask that you raise the matter with the General Staff for their earliest consideration, because, as stated above, we find ourselves in the greatest possible difficulties.

I hold myself quite at your service in the matter of any interview that you may desire in respect of this letter, and remain, dear Count Wengersky,

Yours very truly

(Signed) O. T. CROSBY

[45] Commissary officer for the civil population in Northern France and Flanders.

DOCUMENT NO. 355

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *stating the position of the British Government relative to the requisitioning of crops in East and West Flanders and Northern France*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
30 September 1915

DEAR MR. HOOVER:

Many thanks for your letter of the 24th enclosing copies of your two letters of the 14th to Mr. Crosby about the harvest in the "zone of operations" in East and West Flanders and in Northern France.

As you are aware, we have been able to make definite arrangements with you in regard to the continuation of your work in the zone of occupation in Belgium under civil administration, in view of the undertakings given to you by that administration. We have been able to enter into no such arrangements with regard to the zone of operations in Belgium or with regard to Northern France, and, in the absence of any binding engagements on the part of the German military authorities who control those regions, we are from day to day uncertain whether to allow your importations into them to continue.

As regards the Belgian zone of operations, you have asked that the whole wheat harvest should be handed over to the civil population and that sufficient rye, oats, hay, and other fodder crops should be reserved to support the animals during the winter. This, as you know, is the minimum with which we can be satisfied. If you obtain a binding engagement to this effect, we shall be prepared to arrange for the continuation of your work, but if you cannot inform us on your return from Belgium that the German military authorities have accorded you this measure of justice, I think we shall probably feel obliged to require you to import no more foodstuffs into the area of Belgium under military administration.

As regards Northern France,[46] you have asked for very little—only that the German authorities shall resell to the population for the same price at which it was bought, and in the same currency, an amount of breadstuffs equivalent to one hundred grammes of flour per capita per diem for the next twelve months. I understand the German authorities claim the right to dispose of the harvest on the ground that it has been raised by German labour and German advances of money and seed. This is not a claim to which we could possibly assent. The difference between the occupied areas of France and Belgium is, I understand, that the former are denuded of able-bodied labour, while the latter are not. But in Belgium the German Government have always denied responsibility for the support of the population on the ground that it was not destitute and could pay for imported foodstuffs in the normal way provided such imports were

[46] Negotiations between the Commission and the military authorities were also under way at this time. They are shown in Documents 360–363 below.

permitted by the Allied Governments. Now, in France the German authorities refuse responsibility on the ground that the population *is* destitute. Comment is needless—except to add that the Germans have requisitioned labour in these French districts; they have seized the existing resources of the country at Lille and throughout the manufacturing districts; they have subjected the population to all manner of extortions and they deported some months ago a large section of the population whose fields they now take credit to themselves for having tilled.

Neither we, nor the civilized world, when these facts are published, could possibly recognise the claim of the German Army to any portion of the harvest in Northern France. I recognise, however, that the demand you have made, though less than our requirements, is as much as can be expected from an army wholly indifferent to the fate of the population whose territory it occupies. But your modest demand is, I am sure, the very least we could think of accepting, and if it is not immediately complied with we shall have to reconsider our whole attitude towards the provisioning of France.

And I must make clear to you the implications of this demand. No part of the harvest must be made the means of any coercion or any impositions on the population in any shape or form; that inadequate part of the harvest which the Germans guarantee to the population must be delivered to them as their right, and the delivery must be coupled with no conditions on the part of the German Army.

Something is known here of the extortions of all kinds to which the population has been subjected in the past, and in all the sphere of your arrangements with the Germans you must guard against the possibility of any use of such methods in this connection in the future.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

DOCUMENT NO. 356

Letter, CROSBY TO C.R.B., LONDON, *enclosing a note of a representative of the German military authorities stating the German policy with respect to cereals in the Belgian Etapes*

BRUSSELS, 29 September 1915

The Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

GENTLEMEN:

Oberlieutenant Schroeder dictated today a note—copy enclosed, French original and English Translation—as setting forth the determination made by the German authorities in respect to cereals in the two Flanders.

In one portion of that territory the commanding officer has issued a somewhat different program, but it is presumed that the one shown

in Lieutenant Schroeder's memorandum will be made uniform throughout the territory in question.

We are now taking steps to see that the amount of wheat and rye for the bread supply, indicated in the first paragraph of Lieutenant Schroeder's memorandum, will get into the hands of the Provincial Committees so that it may be counted upon as a part of the general stock to be distributed by the Provincial Committees.

It will be seen that there is some doubt as to the exact amount of wheat as compared to the amount of rye that will thus be supplied by German authorities. Lieutenant Schroeder explains that the whole of the wheat crop in the two Flanders will be absorbed by the 120-gram ration and that the present intention is to supply the remainder of the required amount, which will be in the neighborhood of 20,000 tons for the year's program, from other sources. If, however, at any time through accident it will be impossible to deliver wheat, then rye would be furnished instead. For the purpose of our calculations we think it will be satisfactory to assume that these 120 grams of wheat or rye may be figured as all wheat, leaving 200 grams of wheat per capita to be supplied by importation.

The amount of oats per head per day for cattle was not definitely indicated by Lieutenant Schroeder.

Concerning the wheat situation in the North of France, Major von Kessler has telephoned to Count Wengersky that he is confident that on his return from Poland a satisfactory adjustment will be made concerning the method of payment to be required of the French population for their 100-gram ration which will be left to them. Nothing absolutely definite, however, has been done in the matter. Meanwhile considerable deliveries have been made, the matter of payment to be later determined.

Yours very truly

OSCAR T. CROSBY

NOTE BY OBERLIEUTENANT SCHROEDER CONCERNING THE TWO FLANDERS "ETAPES" OF THE FOURTH ARMY

The German authorities have promised to supply 120 grams of wheat per capita of inhabitant per day. In those regions where there is no wheat, they will, if possible, have it sent there, or they will supply instead 120 grams of rye.

Oats and Hay—Oats and hay have been seized by the German authorities, but producers may take therefrom for their needs up to.....kilos per head of cattle for the year. Other foods for cattle, as for instance, maize, barley, etc., are free, can be disposed of according to desire, and can be sold, but not outside the limit of the Etapes. Maximum prices have been fixed.

The potato crop has not been seized at all, but it is forbidden to export potatoes outside the limits of the Etapes.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 357

Letter, CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF, FOURTH ARMY, TO THE COMMISSION, *stating the regulations which had been put into force concerning the harvest in Flanders*

GHENT, 7 October 1915

The Commission for Relief in Belgium, Brussels

GENTLEMEN:

Referring to our correspondence and conferences, the Inspection of Etapes informs you of the regulations which it has made regarding the harvest in the Flanders.

It has been agreed that the whole of the wheat crop of the territory shall be liberated for the civil population.

The entire wheat crop has been estimated to amount to about 40,000 tons.

In order to give the civil population for one year 120 grams of wheat per capita and per day, a round 70,000 tons will be required. Efforts will be made to bring the round 30,000 tons lacking from other territories. Where this is not possible the missing quantity will be supplied from Belgian rye.

If a commune produces less than it needs for itself, another locality which has a surplus at its disposal, will be instructed to supply the quantity lacking to the first commune. Deliveries will be made for periods of three months.

The quantities left to the Communes may be collected by the local members of the Comité National and stored in the magazines of the C.R.B.

What is left of the rye crop will be requisitioned by the German military authorities against cash payment at high prices, 24 marks (30 francs) per 100 kgs.

All wheat and rye seed, as well as all other crops raised here, will be left to the communes.

The oat and hay crops have been requisitioned. One and one-half kg. per head of cattle per day will be left the farmers for their own use. Owners of horses can purchase from the farmers at a fixed maximum price.

Other fodder materials as maize, barley, straw, second hay crop, bran, mangel-wurzels, turnips, and other greens have been liberated, but may not be exported from the Etapes zone. All pasturage, without restriction, has likewise been left to the inhabitants. The same applies to the potato crop.

Maximum prices have been fixed.

On behalf of the Etappen-Inspection
The Chief of the General Staff

(Signed) OSTERTAG, *Oberstlieutenant*

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 358

Extract of letter, Hoover to Percy, *stating the decisions of the German General Staff relative to requisitioning crops in the Belgian Etapes and enclosing a memorandum of agreement between the General Staff and the C.R.B. dated the 7th October 1915*

London, 11 October 1915

Lord Eustace Percy
Foreign Office, London

Dear Lord Eustace:

Harvest in the Belgian Operations Zone

I beg to send you herewith copy of a letter which was settled between ourselves and the Chief of the General Staff in this section of the German Army. In the net this amounts to the following:

You will see that the German Army purchases the oats and all the rye—what the quantity is I do not know, but from all our advices it is not very large. They also take a certain amount of hay, but they leave a prior supply of fodder for the producers and for others, with the intention, I presume, that a sufficiency of fodder should be left in the country for country animals. All the root crops and all the wheat are left over to the civil population and what is more, as a sort of substitution for purchase of the rye and oats, they have undertaken to guarantee a supply of wheat to the population amounting to 120 grams per diem per capita, which will necessitate their finding from outside sources something like 30,000 tons of wheat, with the reservation that if they cannot get the wheat they may supply rye instead.

The above arrangements appear to me to be on the whole satisfactory in these unsatisfactory times, and they are on the whole better than the arrangements made in the Occupation Zone and represent the absolute maximum which we are able to obtain. I trust this will be satisfactory to you, and that we may, besides the usual food, also import fodder into that area for the town animals. . . . .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) Herbert Hoover

DOCUMENT NO. 359

Extract of letter, Percy to Honnold, *authorizing the C.R.B. to proceed with the feeding of the Belgian Etapes*

Foreign Office, London
21 October 1915

Dear Mr. Honnold:

With reference to Mr. Hoover's letters of the 11th and 15th instant, I am now directed to inform the Commission as follows:

We will not ask the Commission to make any further demands in

regard to the disposal of the native crops in the "Etappengebiet" in Belgium, though we are not of course satisfied with the concessions made by the German administration and cannot possibly admit the justice of the German claim to the whole or portions of the rye, oats, and hay crop. But, while not asking you to make any further demands, we take note of the undertakings made by the German administration and shall expect them to be strictly observed. . . . .

. . . . . .

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

5. *Northern France. August–November 1915*

The circumstances under which the Commission extended its activities to Northern France have been shown in the documents of chapter vi. In the agreement under which that relief was conducted the military authorities specifically reserved all rights with respect to local products in the Army Zones, which included the Belgian Etapes. The Germans announced their intention, however, of returning a percentage of the local crops to the civil population. It was the task of the Commission, therefore, to bring the Germans to return as high a percentage as possible. As in the original negotiations respecting relief in Northern France, the French Government declined to give the Commission strong support,[47] direct or indirect, in the discussions respecting the local crops of 1915. These were initiated and concluded by Hoover and the officers of the Commission in Brussels and at Charleville.

Hoover, when in Belgium in July 1915, had made a visit to German Headquarters at Charleville, where Professor Vernon Kellogg was then stationed as chief representative of the Commission for Northern France. In discussions with Major von Kessler of the General Staff Hoover brought up the question of the French crop. Von Kessler repeated to him the policy of the army command to requisition the entire

[47] Not until January 1916 did Hoover receive official approval of the relief arrangements in Northern France and then there was no direct statement by France but a general approval from the British Foreign Office, in which, it was implied, the French concurred. Financial support the French Government continued to give, but it gave Hoover no diplomatic backing whatever in the vital question of shipping. See Document 292, chapter vi.

harvest, but at the same time assured him that plans were in hand to turn back to the civil population a portion of the harvest of both bread-making cereals and potatoes on the condition that the Commission continue to import a supplementary supply of other commodities to complete a ration. After Hoover's departure Mr. Crosby and Professor Kellogg continued the negotiations at Headquarters, and, as the following documents show, finally secured an order from the General Intendant of the German Army on the 23rd August[48] providing for the delivery to the population of the occupied French districts of 100 grams of flour per day and per person from the German stocks. This ration was to be issued by the officers assigned to work with the American delegates, and the stocks, when once distributed, were to enjoy the same protection as the foods imported by the Commission. In order to permit the French committees to secure a sufficient amount of currency to pay for this ration of indigenous flour, the Germans agreed to pay in currency for a proportion of the crop requisitioned.

The supplementary order, providing for the distribution of potatoes to the population, was issued by the General Intendant of the Army on the 3d September. This provided for the distribution of 200 grams per day per person for six months under practically the same conditions as obtained in the case of the deliveries of flour.

DOCUMENT NO. 360

Extract of letter, KELLOGG TO CROSBY, *respecting the disposition of the 1915 crop in the North of France*

CHARLEVILLE, 5 August 1915

Commission for Relief in Belgium, Brussels

DEAR MR. CROSBY:

. . . . . .

DISPOSITION OF THE NEW CROP IN NORTH OF FRANCE

The actual disposition of the new crop of wheat raised in the occupied French territory rests, of course, in the hands of the German military authorities, and the relation of the Commission to this disposition concerns itself only with the possible change in need of imported supplies as determined by what portion, if any, of the crop

[48] See Document 362.

may be put by the German authorities at the disposal of the French population.

At the present moment, all that can be reported touching this matter is that the German authorities have declared an intention to put an amount of this crop in the hands of the French population sufficient to supply 100 grams of flour per diem per capita. This amount is to be used to establish an increase in the daily bread ration and will thus not lessen the amount of flour necessary to be provided the French people through the Commission.

We are not yet fully informed as to the details of the conditions under which the German authorities expect to put this flour (or wheat) into the hands of the French population, but understand that it is proposed to have the wheat milled in Germany at 82 per cent and distributed to the people through the hands of the Commission.

. . . . . .

(Signed) V. L. KELLOGG

DOCUMENT NO. 361

Extracts of letters, KELLOGG TO CROSBY, *relating to the crop in Northern France*

CHARLEVILLE, 6 August 1915

Commission for Relief in Belgium, Brussels

. . . . . .

To refer again to the matter of the crop: the prices of 22 for the wheat and 30 for the flour are in francs (not marks as suggested in Brussels). The price of 30 francs for the flour is based on an estimate (probably an outside one) of the actual cost of the milling and double transportation. Two objections are urged against the plan of leaving the French share of the crop with the people: (*a*) difficulties of milling in France, especially in the district south of Valenciennes; (*b*) difficulty of preventing possible requisitions by changing and moving bodies of troops of quantities of wheat or flour in the hands of the population, whereas as flour in the holy C.R.B. magazines all such danger is avoided.

As to whether the French people buy the 100 grams allowed them or not, it is simply up to them; the Germans don't care. . . . .

CHARLEVILLE, 7 August 1915

. . . . In the matter of the crop there is more to tell you than I can now write. A few important points are, however:

In the cases in which the French communes have already paid the German authorities for seed, cultivation, or harvesting work, they [the communes] will be paid back this money—and in addition receive 20 per cent of the crop price in money.

The French may have their share of the crop in flour milled in Germany or in wheat which they may mill themselves. It seems already arranged that communes in Valenciennes and Montmedy, for example, where there are milling facilities, will take their share in wheat. The German authorities leave it quite to the French communes to decide whether to buy any of the crop or not, and whether to take flour or wheat. They may pay in marks or town bons, and these town bons received by the German authorities in France will be used by them to pay for labor, supplies, etc., in France. The Germans wish to establish this money as the general circulating medium in the country, gradually separating if possible the two kinds of money, i.e., paper marks and French town bons.

The German authorities recognize that there will be a constant abstraction of the wheat in a small way by the peasants from the fields, during the threshing, etc., but are not going to worry much about it. "You cannot muzzle the threshing ox," or words to that effect.

Faithfully yours

(Signed) V. L. KELLOGG

DOCUMENT NO. 362

Agreement, between VON SCHOELER AND THE COMMISSION, *regarding bread cereals, whereby the Germans agree to issue 100 grams of flour per capita per day from the native stocks and the Commission 150 grams of imported flour*

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
23 August 1915

PROVISIONING OF THE FRENCH POPULATION WITH BREAD CEREALS

Proceedings of the Meeting of 16 August 1915. Article 4

1. Beginning at latest on September 11th, there is to be put at the disposal of the population of the occupied French territory the indigenous crop:

At the desire of the Communes, per capita per day at the rate of 100 grams of flour.

2. Assuming this, the Spanish-American Commission has declared itself willing to supply in addition thereto a supplementary ration of 150 grams of flour per day per capita (at least).

3. The population therefore receives per capita per diem 250 grams of flour or about 345 grams of bread. Considering the shortage of other foodstuffs this ration is not deemed too large.

4. The distribution will be made either as corn, where the possibility of milling by the population exists, or, if this is not the case, as flour.

5. With a view to economy in the use of the rye-stock, the flour distributed will be wheat flour, or whole wheat.

6. The distribution is to be based on the statistics made by the Begleitoffizier of the C.R.B. delegates. The quantities thus computed are to be assigned to the Communes, whenever possible, for one month in advance, under the control of these officers.

Stocks once distributed come under the same guarantee of protection as the other provisions imported by the C.R.B. The distribution of the rations is to be attended to by the Communes, but will be superintended by the Begleitoffizier.

Closest co-operation between the Etappen Intendanten and the Begleitoffizier is required.

7. Payment is to be based on the requisitioning price. Thus the Communes in receipt of goods will have to pay for each 100 kilograms of flour (f.o.b.) 30 francs or 24 marks.

8. Payment is to be made in currency. City bonds, etc., are only to be accepted in cases of absolute need, and only in so far as they fulfil the conditions especially prescribed for the case. Wherever possible, payment should be accepted as service of the Communes. This means of settlement is to be preferred.

Should a Commune have absolutely no means of payment, the further distribution of goods to that Commune should be subject to the decision of the General Intendant.

9. In those parts of the country where the C.R.B. cannot deliver for military reasons, the whole ration of 250 grams of flour is to be supplied from the indigenous stocks.

Payment to be made as per parts 7 and 8.

(Signed) VON SCHOELER
General Intendant of the Field Army

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 363

Decree, by GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, *respecting the distribution of the potato crop in Northern France*

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
3 September 1915

DISTRIBUTION OF THE POTATO CROP IN THE OCCUPIED FRENCH ZONE

The needs of the civil populations are primarily to be covered from the potato crops gathered in the occupied French zone. The remaining quantities are then to be applied to the provisioning of the troops. Seed potatoes will be assigned later on either from the Belgian or the domestic crops.

A. Requirements of the population.

1. The requirements are to be reckoned at 200 grams per capita per diem. The numbers of the population established for the provisioning with bread cereals are to be taken as a basis of reckoning.

2. To begin with the requirements are to be definitely assured for six months from the date of the harvest.

3. The assignments to the communes of quantities thus made available will be controlled by the officers in charge of the provisioning of the civil population (Begleitoffizier to C.R.B. delegates), if possible for one month in advance.

Stocks once thus assigned are subject to the same protective measures as goods imported by the C.R.B.

4. In the amounts to be assigned are to be taken into account such quantities as may be obtained by members of the communes from gardens and similar lands.

5. The value of the assigned quantities is accounted for on the following basis:

a) If a receipt is given for the delivery of the potato crop the quantities assigned to the population are to be deducted thereon. If delivery is made from other communal districts, the amounts and the names of the communes to which they have been brought are to appear on the former's receipts.

b) Payment has to be made for such potatoes delivered to the communes as are grown on leased ground.

Where it is possible, the value of the potatoes delivered to the communes should be set off against manual labor received from the communes.

In the matter of price, the requisitioning price of 10 francs per 100 kilos is to be taken as a basis. If the population receives for the feeding of stock, such potatoes as are not fit for human consumption—a matter for individual arrangements with the army in occupation—the estimate of price is to be determined by the army, taking as a basis the aforementioned requisitioning price for edible potatoes.

6. Loading, unloading, and the necessary land transport, is, as far as possible, to be entrusted to the interested communes.

B. Requirements for the provisioning of the troops.

1. The remaining quantities are wholly available for the provisioning of the troops.

2. An estimate is to be made of the period during which the army could be provisioned with these stocks of potatoes.

3. Should the available quantity according to this estimate be insufficient to last from the time of harvest over the winter months, until about the middle of March in the coming year, the stocks in the country are first of all to be reserved over the winter months during which there is danger of frost in the transporting of potatoes by train.

Shortages are first of all to be covered from Belgian stocks. Requests to be addressed to the Etappen Intendantur of the Fourth Army and further to the Army Intendantur with the General Government in Belgium. Home stocks are only to be made use of in case Belgium cannot supply.

C. Delivery of seed potatoes for spring sowing.

Further orders will follow for the delivery of seed potatoes.

[*Translation*] (Signed) VON SCHOELER

DOCUMENT NO. 364

Letter, Hoover to Crosby, *regarding the requisitioning of crops in Northern France*

Brussels, 14 September 1915

Dear Mr. Crosby:

North of France Population

I am glad to be able to tell you that we have settled arrangements for a monthly subsidy from institutions in France to cover the cost of this ravitaillement up to an expenditure of 14 (fourteen) million francs a month. Owing however, to the fall in exchange, it will require great economy on our part to get through with this sum.

There are one or two pledges which I have given in connection with this monthly subsidy which I must set out to you. You will recollect that the original arrangements for the ravitaillement of this region were all to expire with the arrival of the new harvest, it being assumed that the country would itself produce enough for the civil population. In taking up the continuation after harvest, we have been met with great opposition to our application for blockade permits from the governments involved, those governments contending: "that the civil population has the first right to the harvest and that only the surplus, left after the entire requirements of the civilians are satisfied can be lawfully taken by the German authorities, and the harvest in Northern France is ample for the requirements of the civil population. If any part of the requirements of the population is taken by the German authorities, then any imports by the Relief Commission amount to a replacement of foodstuffs taken by the German Army and thus in effect the Relief Commission is supplying the German Army."

We do not ourselves ever enter into discussion of the right or wrong of such contentions, our one desire being to be of relief service and to effect arrangements which permit us to do so. I have replied that, by virtue of cultivation by the Germans, by advances in money and seed, the German Army has an interest itself in the harvest.

Furthermore, I have repeated the assurance which you have made to me that while the German authorities were going to requisition the entire harvest, they had given you positive assurance that they would resell without profit an amount of breadstuffs equal to 100 grams of flour per capita per diem and that this arrangement was conditional upon the Relief Commission making up the ration to 250 grams per diem and the continuation of our other large supplies of rice, lard, and bacon.

On my presenting these assurances to the English and French Governments they of course objected that the contribution of 100 grams was an entirely insufficient proportion of the total harvest and among other things demanded to know in what sort of currency the harvest was going to be paid for, and what sort of currency

should be accepted by the German authorities for the flour resold. And upon my raising the question to you as to whether the requisition receipts would be accepted for the purchase of the flour, you out, as I have had implicit confidence in the assurances of the German authorities that enough of the purchase price would be given in francs or marks to pay the 100 grams of flour with the same paper, and I might repeat that I have received much the same assurance on my visit to Charleville at an earlier date.

Now, in order to get the right and resources for us to continue, I have given my own word that these undertakings will be carried out, as I have had implicit confidence in the assurances of the German authorities. I hear now, however, that there is a great lack of uniformity in the matter of payment as treated by the different army corps and that in certain districts marks and francs are being demanded from the population in payment of the 100-gram ration, while, I understand, no such payments had ever been made in such currency for the harvest.

I trust that you will take this matter up at once with the General Staff and see that they will interest themselves in straightening it out. The matter is one of most serious importance to the whole of this relief work, because it is cutting through belligerent lines, and in carrying on relations with belligerent governments, who can make no direct undertakings, the whole foundation rests on our being able to maintain good face with both belligerents in every assurance which I gave on either side.

Yours very truly

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 365

Extract of letter, WHITNEY TO POLAND, *regarding methods of the German Army in delivering local supplies to the French civil population*

CHARLEVILLE, 9 November 1915

MY DEAR POLAND:[49]

. . . . . .

All goes well *in re* the German flour question. Instructions have been given every officer, including Rumelin at Longwy, to deliver the 100 grams of German flour per capita, whether or not there is the money to pay for it. Here in Charleville the Germans are dealing with the district headquarters—turning over to the French syndicate the flour to the credit of the district and letting the syndicate do the apportioning, etc., as between regions and communes.

This is simple and practical, and an effort will be made to put the

[49] W. B. Poland succeeded Crosby as director of the C.R.B. Brussels office in December 1915.

same plan into effect in the other districts. Meantime, however, there is to be no withholding of German flour from the people anywhere—such are the orders—pending a decision as to the detailed method of payment.

Sincerely

(Signed) CASPAR WHITNEY

(ENCLOSURE)

MEMORANDUM

North of France—Native Crop—Issue of Flour by German Authorities

After an interview with Count Wengersky, Dr. Kellogg announces that the General Headquarters has decided for the entire Northern France that the 120 grams of wheat, equivalent to 100 grams of flour, per capita per day shall be issued to the entire community and in order to avoid trouble in those cases where the people have but small amount of money, same may be paid for in Quartermaster's bonds, with which they paid for the crop seized.

6. *The Harvest of 1916. February–September 1916*

Early in 1916 political pressure from representatives in Paris of the occupied regions of Northern France, supplemented perhaps by British influence, caused the French Government to take a more active interest than it had previously shown in the disposition of the local products of the German Army Zones. Through the medium of the British Foreign Office, the French confidentially requested the Commission to attempt to secure from the Germans the reservation of the entire harvest in French territory, but failing this, as was likely in view of German participation in making the crop, the Commission was asked to secure the reservation of as much of the harvest as possible—at least a guaranteed minimum per capita regardless of the amount of the local harvest. In contrast to these private instructions the British Foreign Office, in the name of the Allied Governments, notified the Commission and the German Government through Ambassador Page that unless the principle be established that all products of the soil in the Army Zones be reserved for the civil population, all relief operations would be ended. This ultimatum precipitated a first class crisis for the Commission. Negotiations between the Commission and the British and German Governments on the question of relief

to Poland[50] had just broken down to the accompaniment of recriminatory broadsides from London and Berlin leaving both even less inclined to compromise than usual. Hoover's first efforts to approach the German authorities through diplomatic channels resulted merely in showing that nothing could be accomplished by that route. The prestige and influence of the Commission as the neutral protector of the people in the Army Zones was the only support on which Hoover could rely in the negotiations which he undertook in Berlin in August 1916. Fortunately for the hard-pressed people of the occupied districts he succeeded in what appeared to be a hopeless task, and on the 26th August the High Command made an agreement with the Commission putting into effect the provisions which reconciled the Allied demand, that the entire local crop be reserved, with the Germans' valid claim to ownership of part of the crop through their participation in its production. This incident illustrates particularly well the unique standing of the Commission in its relations with the belligerents and its responsibilities as guardian of nine million French and Belgians.

DOCUMENT NO. 366

Letter, VON KESSLER TO C.R.B., BRUSSELS OFFICE, *stating that the German Army will deliver 100 grams of flour per capita to French civil population until the next harvest*

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
15 February 1916

To the Central Office
of the Commission for Relief in Belgium
for the Occupied Territory in North France:

The promised delivery of 100 grams of flour per head per day to the population of the occupied French territory will be continued until the next harvest, provided the Commission for Relief in Belgium continue to deliver the 150 grams of flour per head per day promised by it.

By order

(Signed) VON KESSLER
Major in the General Staff
General Staff Officer with the Commissariat
General of the Field Army

[50] See chapter xi.

DOCUMENT NO. 367

Letter, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *explaining the situation in Northern France in reference to the production and protection of native foodstuffs*

LONDON, 18 March 1916

Louis Chevrillon, Esq., Paris

DEAR CHEVRILLON:

With regard to your letter of the 15th instant, you will, I think, find a considerable amount of the material which you want in the documents I sent you last evening. You will bear in mind that there is a volume of correspondence in our Brussels office and in the various American Embassies which we have not in this office. I will endeavor on my trip to Belgium to get some further material from Brussels, although except with the permission of the German censor this is impossible. A part of agreements with the Germans consists in settling decrees with them, and their issue constitutes for us an agreement.

As to the general question of the protection of native foodstuffs in Northern France on the same basis as the occupied territory in Belgium, there are two or three points worth bearing in mind: First, as Northern France is wholly within the Operations Zone there is no definite form of civil government, but simply the decentralization of six different armies, whose control of the civil population is quite independent of each other, and who are never disposed to act in concert except by way of recommendation from the General Staff, which they do or do not carry out in detail as they see fit. This makes constant agitation on our part necessary. I think the French Foreign Office should recognize that it is utterly impossible that any kind of measures controlling the native food supply could be set up in the actual Operations Zone of the army to be controlled by neutrals, in the same way as is possible under the civil government in Belgium.

As to the requisitioning of French wheat, when I am in Brussels I will endeavor to get some further details. This affair in fact falls into four classes: first, land planted by the Germans and harvested by themselves; second, abandoned land for which they hired French workpeople on the basis of advancing them seed and animals for a share of the crop; third, sections where they advanced seed and ploughed the land with their steam ploughs, giving the peasant a right by virtue of some labor and land ownership, to a share of the crop; fourth, cases where the peasants raised their own crops without any relations with the Germans. All these involved different relations, and if you take it that the whole harvest was requisitioned the conditions of requisition vary with the various classes. The stuff is mostly paid for with requisition "bons," and some money has passed—how much I am unable to say.

I should like to make one observation on this whole question,

which I think you should bring home to the French Foreign Office. I visited Paris in July last and in company with you called on Mr. Humbert and stated to him plainly that we were enormously concerned for the French harvest; that we were endeavoring to negotiate the situation to the best of our abilities and that we wished the views of the French Government as to its attitude and on this question as affecting continued ravitaillement and their requirements in the matter. We were unable to get any view whatever and gained the impression that nobody cared. We were compelled to take up the question with the Germans without the strong support which I was solicitous to obtain, and we did the best we could under the circumstances.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 368

Letter, HOOVER TO VON KESSLER, *stating the difficulties of finding sufficient foodstuffs for Northern France, broaching the plan for importing milk herds and asking that all native foods be reserved for the people*

LONDON, 1 April 1916

Major von Kessler, Generalquartiermeister,
Grosses Hauptquartier

MY DEAR MAJOR VON KESSLER:

There is one matter in connection with the ravitaillement of Northern France in which it appears to me a new situation has gradually developed and which I would like to raise with you, in the hope that you can, as always heretofore, find some solution of a favorable nature. This is the question of the remaining native food supplies in the country in the shape of cattle, milk, butter, chickens, eggs, rabbits, etc.

The native supplies have undoubtedly diminished to a very low ebb and while it is our impression that they are not, in actual amount of food, of very great importance from a military point of view, they have become of great importance to the civilian population as the final margin on which they can eke out an existence by way of supplement to the ration which we are able to import.

The great limitations placed upon our import through the inability to secure adequate transportation and the many shortages in the world's markets make it wholly unfeasible for us to supply a sufficient amount of food to keep these people going, unless they can get something more out of the country.

The present situation with regard to these supplies is the outgrowth of the length of the period of occupation which has gone far beyond a period which any of us would have anticipated and this time element has thus created a new situation which, it seems

to me, warrants reconsideration of the whole situation in this particular.

Requisitions to an amount which at one time represented only the surplus have through the decrease in supplies generally now amounted to almost the whole of certain articles.

I recognize that the matter is only of indirect interest to us, but one must consider the matter as a whole, and furthermore I am extremely keen to avoid any possible criticism as to our operations degenerating into a replacement through imports, such as milk, of the native supplies absorbed by the occupying army.

It is obvious that the local supplies of meat are down to a point far under the necessities of the population, yet there are some cattle, pigs, sheep, rabbits, and chickens in the country. It is physically almost impossible to import a sufficient amount of bacon and lard from overseas or fresh meat from Belgium or Holland to maintain anything like normal fat and protein necessities, and the continuous absorption of meat by the troops aggravates the situation to a degree which it seems now impossible to compass.

Also I understand that milk and butter from native cattle are requisitioned and purchased for the troops. The local milk supply is now far under that required for the children and infirm. We have tried hard to secure by import a sufficiency to maintain these classes, but the demand on the world's milk supplies makes it hopeless, even had we sufficient transport, to do more than we have already done, and even with the local milk and butter these supplies are far below the needs of the people.

We wish to make an effort to remedy this to some extent by the establishment of milk herds on behalf of the most necessitous communes through the importation of cows from Belgium or Holland, but this effort would come to but little result unless the milk supply already in the country could go to the civil population.

I recognize fully the stupendous difficulties arising out of any attempt to reserve such native food supplies to the population during military occupation, but if requisition were abandoned and if the purchase of native food supplies were limited to the occasional purchases by soldiers from local sources, it would be all that any practical person could assume would be possible.

I am fully aware that the requisition and purchase of native food supplies by the occupying army is entirely proper and a usual proceeding, but in view of the critical difficulties with which their whole provisioning is surrounded at the present time and the very little hope which we could have to adequately provision the population without reserving to them the margin of native supplies, I do hope that the matter could be considered by the authorities and some favorable action taken.

Altogether no one has a higher appreciation than myself of the efforts which the German authorities have made in the ravitaillement of this population under the difficult circumstances under which they are compelled to operate and this further concession on their part would, I believe, have not only great practical value, but

would have considerable sentimental usefulness, and I am fully aware that the latter question is not foreign to the mind of the German authorities.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 369

Extract of letter, CHEVRILLON TO HONNOLD, *describing the stiffening of the French attitude with respect to native products in the Army Zones, and enclosing a letter to the French Foreign Office on the same subject*

PARIS, 13 June 1916

W. L. Honnold, Esq.
Commission for Relief in Belgium, London

DEAR MR. HONNOLD:

. . . . . .

NORTHERN FRANCE

I am advised from the Foreign Office that the French Government intends to take measures in order that the Commission should obtain from the Germans the full French crop for the benefit of the French civil population. I am, at once, setting all the influence I can in motion to oppose this, as I know perfectly well that no weapon can be put into your hands to obtain this from the Germans unless it be more suffering for the unfortunate populations under German rule, and I do not believe that the Germans accept this unless the French Government goes to the length of actually stopping all relief. I believe I am right in this, but would like to have your views. I may say here that the telegram of Mr. Gerard concerning Poland[51] has had the effect of stiffening the French attitude, because the Foreign Office wrongly believed that the Germans have made concessions to the representations of Sir Edward Grey. They therefore consider that a strong attitude is the proper line to take and that the Germans will also give in in Northern France if we threaten stoppage of relief unless they allow the full French crop for French needs. I would be glad to have your views on this.

Yours faithfully

L. CHEVRILLON

Enclosed please find copy of a letter to the Foreign Office. I was advised yesterday that we were to be instructed to obtain the total French crop for French needs and I at once wrote the enclosed letter which I hope Mr. Hoover and yourself will approve.

[51] See chapter xi.

PARIS, 13 June 1916

Monsieur Kammerer, Consul-Général de France,
Chef-Adjoint au Cabinet du Ministre des Affaires Etrangères
Paris

DEAR SIR:

Following our conversation of last Sunday in respect of the protection of the French crops in Northern France, I deem, since the question has again been raised, that it is important to determine certain points.

In the first place, the occasion for the decision taken to insist on the protection of the totality of the harvest was the telegram from the Ambassador, Mr. Gerard, in Berlin, to Ambassador Page, in London, on the 1st June 1916, à propos of the revictualing of Poland. This telegram would have seemed to convey the impression that Germany yielded to certain conditions imposed by the British Government. The following is an historical account of the negotiations of which the telegram in question speaks:

Since last year, the Commission has been following up the progress of the famine in Poland and, in the month of December, they despatched a delegate to that country, Mr. Caspar Whitney, whose report concluded in the urgency of the revictualment. Conditions were discussed in Berlin by Mr. Whitney and the representative of the Rockefeller Foundation, and about the end of February Mr. Page presented to Sir Edward a project which he tried hard to get accepted by Germany. This proposal was rejected and the matter of the ravitaillement of Poland was temporarily abandoned. The subject was again taken up in England in May, and on the 13th Sir Edward Grey published the text of the proposal which had been submitted to him and declared that the British Government was in accord with all the points in this proposal, but demanded the following assurances (see *The Times* of the 13th May 1916):

1. The project should be applied to the whole of Poland.
2. The occupation army should not be fed.
3. The exportation of potatoes should be forbidden, excepting by the assent of the Commission.
4. German boats should be manned by neutral crews.
5. The Commission should only furnish a supplementary ration to that which the enemy could supply.
6. The Commission should be absolutely free.
7. The German and Austro-Hungarian Governments should engage themselves to revictual the populations of Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro.

According to the telegram of the 1st June from Ambassador Gerard, Germany rejects the stipulations 1, 2, and 7. She accepts stipulation No. 3, and the other issues were already covered by the first proposition.

It is not, therefore, quite right to consider Ambassador Gerard's telegram as an acceptation without reserve as to the conditions imposed by the British Government.

In so far as Northern France is concerned I believe it to be of

importance to state precisely the action of the Commission. In order to judge the situation, it is primarily essential to consider the fact that Belgium is under a civil government with an occupying army not exceeding 50,000 men, whilst the North of France is occupied by combatant armies representing over a million men. In the first case, the Commission can negotiate with an established government which has every reason for showing itself to be well disposed vis-à-vis the populations; in the other case, the Commission defends French interests against the combatant armies who enjoy almost complete autonomy.

In March 1915, Mr. Hoover came to Paris with the object of organizing the ravitaillement in Northern France, and to take instructions from the French Government which he did not succeed in obtaining. The Commission then did its best and succeeded in that Northern France might retain approximately one-third of the total harvest. Having only as sanction for imposing its demands on the Germans a threat of famine, it did not deem it proper to undertake a responsibility which is not within the province of a neutral commission devoting itself to a philanthropic work.

Considering the German participation in the agricultural work in Northern France, it seems at first sight certain that we will not obtain the totality of the harvest for the civil populations; further, each time we exact a new concession from the Germans, we always knock up against the German argument of the food blockade which serves them as a pretext in refusing to discuss the obligation by the occupying authorities to feed the people. My feeling is that, despite the desire which one may have to increase the proportion of the harvest set aside for the alimentation of the civil population, the proportion which we have today, representing 7,500 tons of wheat monthly (viz., 90,000 tons per annum), does not fall far short of the maximum which we could obtain; and, in these circumstances, I ask you kindly to consider that the only weapon in our possession is a menace to interrupt the ravitaillement, commencing to enforce same.

I do not know whether you will gain a clear idea of the lamentable situation in Northern France today, and to what degree of misery the population is reduced. To increase their hardships would be to incur the responsibility of an increase in mortality which I cannot describe precisely but which would certainly be considerable in view of the fact that the statistics for the month of March show that under existing conditions and through insufficient alimentation the rate of mortality in Lille has risen from 17 to 40/1,000.

I believed it to be indispensable to expose to you the above-mentioned observations in order to clearly demonstrate the eventual consquences of a new intervention. The Commission is entirely disposed to re-commence negotiations on the basis which it will suit the Government to formulate, but should plainly refuse to undertake the carrying out of a sanction which would compromise the existence of the populations of whom it has charge.

Very cordially yours

[*Translation*] (Signed) L. CHEVRILLON

DOCUMENT NO. 370

Letter, PERCY TO HOOVER, *enclosing a note from the French Government giving directions for negotiating with the Germans concerning the reservation of the crop in Northern France*

FOREIGN OFFICE, LONDON
8 July 1916

Very Confidential

DEAR HOOVER:

You have received a copy of a letter dated July 7th which has been addressed to the patrons of the Commission here about the coming harvest in Belgium and Northern France.

I enclose for your private information a note prepared by the French Government for your confidential guidance in these negotiations. I should like to see you about this whole question some time, but meanwhile you will understand the private character of this note which is for your own eye and not for communication to anyone else.

Yours sincerely

(Signed) EUSTACE PERCY

NOTE

A. It appears indispensable to lay down the principle that the entire harvest in French territory must be left at the disposal of the population. This request will probably be rejected, and the negotiating party should take note of the refusal as an abuse of power which he cannot withstand.

B. Admitting this hypothesis, the negotiating party should then consider the facts and find a practical solution. He will request that at least a part (one-half or a third) of the crops grown on French soil from German seed and with the assistance of German labor, be reserved for the population to whom the soil belongs.

This request must be rigidly upheld. It seems difficult, however, to make of it the object for a threat to break off the ravitaillement which is the supreme reason for discussion.

C. On the other hand, if the request formulated in the preceding paragraph is rejected, the negotiating party should insist that the portion of the crops of French invaded territory obtained without any assistance on the part of the Germans, be left in its entirety at the disposal of the French population.

D. Further, since it is impossible to know precisely the quantity of grain that will be produced without German participation, the undertaking outlined in paragraph C should have for an indispensable complement an agreement entered into by the German Government to assure a minimum amount of grain per capita and per month to the French population, whatever be the quantity of grain produced by the crops which are purely French.

A similar undertaking was approved of last year by the German Government, but without including the corollary agreement as to the final disposal of the crops. On this occasion it would be expedient to link the two questions. Moreover, it would be necessary to increase the percentage of grain thus assured per capita and per day, taking into account the facts assembled for this purpose through the efforts of the Commission for Relief in Belgium.

E. The conditions enumerated in paragraphs C and D must be considered as *sine qua non,* on pain of seeing the Germans exploit at will French territory, in violation of the rights of individuals and thus bring about in the interest of their own food supply an increase in the ravitaillement already so difficult to achieve.

The negotiator should therefore be authorized to declare that he declines all responsibility as to the continuance of the ravitaillement, if the conditions C and D are rejected, the Allied Governments appearing to be resolved in such an event to remind Germany of the obligations incumbent upon her, in conformity with international rights and usage in respect of the feeding of the populations in occupied territories.

July 1916

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 371

Letter, Lord Robert Cecil to Page, *stating the British Government's insistence that the whole harvest and all products of the soil in Belgium and French territory under German occupation be reserved for the civil population*

Foreign Office, London
7 July 1916

My Dear Ambassador:

The Allied Governments have been carefully considering the question of the disposal of the harvest in the regions of Belgium and Northern France under German occupation where the Commission for Relief in Belgium is carrying on its work.

The Allied Governments feel obliged to demand that throughout the whole of this territory the same principles shall be established and observed as are now recognised in the zone of Belgium under civil administration, namely, that the whole harvest and all produce of the soil whatsoever in Belgium and in Northern France shall be reserved in their entirety for the civil population.

The details as to the precise measures necessary to collect, control, and distribute the native crops may be settled by the Relief Commission, but the arrangements finally made must carry out the principle stated above, which the Allied Governments regard as an absolute condition of the continuance of the work of the Commission.

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) Robert Cecil

DOCUMENT NO. 372

Letter, HOOVER TO GERARD, *requesting the Ambassador to take up with the German authorities the reservation of the crop in the Army Zones of Belgium and Northern France*

LONDON, 11 July 1916

DEAR MR. GERARD:

By this mail Dr. Page will be forwarding you a despatch from the British Government, dated 7th July 1916, in which the Allied Governments demand that the whole produce of the soil in Belgium and Northern France shall be reserved entirely for the civil population. This demand does not relate to the Occupation Zone in Belgium, but only to the Etappengebiet in Belgium and to the occupied area in Northern France. These two areas are under the direct control of the German Army, therefore are under the General Staff and as before we have to rely upon you and your own individual exertions with the Staff in this matter, as Mr. Whitlock is powerless to intervene outside the Occupation Zone. I also enclose a memorandum which has been handed to me on the normal production of the area actually occupied by the German Army in Northern France.

The problems raised in this demand are not so simple as they might appear on the face, especially with regard to Northern France. In this area the Germans have themselves taken over and cultivated large areas of which they may justly claim the results and furthermore they have established all kinds of relations with the peasants, in the provision of seeds, additional labor, horses, etc., and have therefore established themselves some sort of a right in further areas. Moreover, any scheme under which the harvest should be physically taken over by the relief organization in this area is almost unthinkable from a practical point of view. Therefore, it would appear to me that the basis of discussion should take the form of the German authorities furnishing to you an estimate of the harvest of various commodities and the proportion which they consider has been raised by the result of their exertions and it will be necessary for our people to have a discussion on the whole question as to what basis can be arrived at which will enable Mr. Page to satisfy the Allied Governments.

With regard to the Etappen in Belgium, the problems are simpler in that, as I understand, the German Army have taken no part in planting, or otherwise in the production of the harvest. Furthermore, the arrangement we had last year, by which the German authorities took over the entire harvest of breadstuffs and in turn furnished our local committees with a definite monthly quota, did not work out very fortunately for either side, as the Germans found themselves practically powerless to collect the harvest from the stubborn peasants and it would seem that this area should be discussed on some new footing of more practical order. In any event, if you would be good enough to take the matter up with the German Government and impress upon them that we are having the usual

time to defend the Relief and that we shall be able to save it in these regions only by close co-operation from them, it will undoubtedly contribute to arriving at a satisfactory understanding.

I shall go into Belgium in the course of the next ten or fourteen days and would like to be advised by you as to whether I should go to Berlin to take up the matter there or whether I should intervene directly with the General Staff at Charleville. At least it will have prepared the way for detailed discussion if you are so good as to take up the matter with the authorities at Berlin in advance and thus give them some time for consideration.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 373

Letter, GERARD TO HELFFERICH, *forwarding the statement of the British Government with Hoover's suggestions as a basis for negotiations*

BERLIN, 18 July 1916

His Excellency, Dr. Helfferich,
Imperial Secretary of State for the Interior and Vice Chancellor, etc.

MY DEAR EXCELLENCY:

Our Ambassador in London has received a letter from the British Government, of which a copy follows. I have also received a letter from Mr. Herbert Hoover, stating that he will come to Berlin to confer with whoever has charge of this matter or would go to Charleville to confer with the officers of the General Staff there. I spoke of this matter yesterday to His Excellency Herr von Jagow and, if you remember, he called you on the telephone and then informed me that you would be very glad to confer with Mr. Hoover on the matter.

As I understand it, the demand now made by the Allied Governments does not relate to the occupation area in Belgium, but to that territory known as the Etappengebiet and to all of the occupied area in Northern France. These two areas are, I believe, under the direct control of the General Staff.

I understand, of course, that in Northern France the German Army of Occupation has taken over and cultivated large areas and has further furnished seeds, additional labor, horses, etc., to the peasants.

Possibly the discussion should take the form of the German authorities furnishing to Mr. Hoover and to me an estimate of the harvest of the various grains and the proportion of these which they consider has been raised as the result of the work of the German Army or by its assistance. This refers to the occupied territory in Northern France.

With regard to the Etappengebiet in Belgium, I understand that the problem there is simpler, because the German Army has taken

no part in planting or otherwise producing the harvest. In this area the arrangement made last year, by which the German authorities took over the entire harvest of breadstuffs in this territory and in turn agreed to furnish the local committees with a definite monthly amount of grain or meal did not work out well in practice for either side, owing to the difficulty which the Germans had in collecting the harvest from the peasants and therefore it would seem that for the coming harvest year some new arrangement for this Etappengebiet should be discussed. Of course, the Commission for the Relief in Belgium is very anxious that the relief should go on and that the importation of food should not be stopped by the Allies, and therefore hopes that some arrangement can be arrived at, satisfactory to all parties.

I am simply setting out these facts in this letter in order that your assistants may be considering the matter before the arrival of Mr. Hoover. I am telegraphing Mr. Hoover that you will take up the matter with him, and I think he will be in Berlin in about two weeks.

I understand that the normal production of the occupied area of Northern France is about as follows:

Wheat	950,000 tons
Rye	82,000 tons
Barley	60,000 tons
Oats	720,000 tons
Potatoes	750,000 tons

Yours very sincerely

(Signed) JAMES W. GERARD

DOCUMENT NO. 374

Letter, DR. HELFFERICH TO GERARD, *concerning the crop of the Belgian Etapes and Northern France and referring Hoover to German General Staff for further negotiations*

BERLIN, 25 July 1916

MY DEAR EXCELLENCY:

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your esteemed letter dated July 18th, to which you were kind enough to append the Note of the English Foreign Office under date of July 7th addressed to the American Ambassador at London. The question of supplying the territory of Northern France occupied by German troops and of the lines of communication in Belgium concerns the chief military authorities in the first place. To the latter I have therefore transmitted Your Excellency's communication and inquired, where, according to their idea, the conference desired by Mr. Hoover should most expediently be arranged. Immediately upon receipt of a reply, I shall hasten to inform Your Excellency of the same.

I take pleasure in availing myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the assurances of my highest esteem.

(Signed) HELFFERICH

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 375

Extract, from KELLOGG: *"Fighting Starvation in Belgium,"*[52] *pp. 58–65, describing conferences in Berlin in August 1916 between Hoover and German Military authorities concerning the reservation of the 1916 crop in the Army Zones for the local population and concerning the import of Holland produce into the North of France*

On August 3d Mr. Hoover and I started for Berlin. On the same train we found Baron von der Lancken, chief of the political department of General von Bissing's Government, and Dr. Rieth, of his staff, both of whom had shown themselves friendly to the Dutch imports matter. From them we learned that there was to be a great conference in Berlin, and that three important Great Headquarters' officers, two of whom we knew to be friendly to our requests in the matter of the French native crop, were also on their way to Berlin. We felt, therefore, less alone in our struggle to help save the lives of 600,000 children of Northern France. These men would aid us!

Making the trip to the German capital without uncomfortable incident, thanks to our special military passes, we arrived at nine o'clock the next morning, and, by chance, met at once, in the lobby of the Hotel Esplanade, one of the Great Headquarters' officers, Hauptmann Graf W[engersky], through whom all Commission affairs were always first taken up when we had dealings with the General Staff. He greeted us with some haste and said that he had to rush off at once to an important conference on our affairs. He was wholly uncommunicative about the scope and character of the meeting, but informed us that General X———, Acting Quartermaster General of the German army, wished us to take tea with him at the hotel at four o'clock. We understood that this was to be an important tea-drinking!

In our need for support we went to see Ambassador Gerard. He had never failed in his energetic support whenever the Commission needed help at the Berlin Court. He gave us advice which, at the moment, was disheartening, but turned out to be wise counsel. It was that we should steer clear of invoking official governmental assistance in this affair, but should make the fight simply on the basis of the Commission's standing and influence, and keep international politics out of it as far as possible. The Germans knew that all we were struggling for was the good of the imprisoned people of Belgium and France, and that we were playing the game honestly. He believed that the Commission could fight this fight best alone. His words were at least an encouraging assurance to us of the Commission's extraordinary international position.

Promptly at four we found the three officers from the Great Headquarters, the third being Major von K[essler], a man of great capacity, under whose immediate supervision rested all affairs connected with the feeding of the civil population in the occupied territory. He had always handled Commission matters with intelligence and prompt decision, and usually with sympathetic understanding. We had known Count W[engersky] and Major von K[essler]

[52] With the kind permission of Messrs. Doubleday, Doran & Co.

ever since the beginning of the work, but it was our first meeting with General X———, whose office was one of high importance, only second in importance, indeed, in the German army, to the Chief of Staff of the Field Armies, a position at that time filled by General von Falkenhayn. General X——— is an enormous burly man and makes an impression of brutal strength. He drank whisky instead of tea.

As we sat down, Major von K[essler], with characteristic promptness and in a few words, gave us news of the great conference. It was startling news and most of it bad. The conference was one of important representatives of the General Staff, the General Government of Belgium, the Foreign Office, the Department of the Interior, and of all other departments immediately interested in the handling of the civil populations in all occupied territories. It had apparently already definitely decided that we could import no Dutch foodstuffs, and that no further allocation of the French native crop could be made to the civil population. But these were only incidents in a larger question taken up by it, which was that of the Commission's being allowed to continue its work at all! Just as the famous meeting with Mr. Lloyd George on January 21, 1915—arranged primarily for a discussion of certain phases of the Commission's activities—revealed the strength of the feeling in England against the relief work as a whole, so this Berlin visit of ours, to take up simply two special points in our work, revealed itself as coincident with a crisis in the Commission's history, determined by the crystallisation of the German opposition to the work.

Major von K[essler] said that things looked very bad for us. Extremely violent speeches had been made against the work, and only two or three men had ventured to speak in favour of it. These were, however, men of influence, and represented important parts of the Government, notably the Foreign Office and Interior. But the Reventlow jingoes were in the saddle. A special cause of bitterness was a public despatch from the British Foreign Minister which had just been published in all the German papers, demanding that the German authorities turn over to the civil populations in the French, Polish, and Serbian occupied territories (as had already been done in Belgium) the entirety of the native products of these territories. The bellicose speakers in the conference demanded that the German Government answer this despatch at once with a curt refusal and a statement that, as the British blockade was responsible for the food deprivations of the Belgians and French, the ravitaillement should be abolished, the people allowed to starve, and the Allied governments be held responsible for their starvation. These men declared that Germany could not for one moment accept the position that England should dictate its attitude and action toward the occupied territories, and that the only position Germany could take henceforth was to throw the population on the shoulders of England, which could open its blockade or let the Belgians and French starve, just as it was trying to let the Germans starve.

The feeling all over Germany was high, and the conference seemed likely to end the Commission's work then and there. Just

one ray of light came to us in this dark hour. During our depressing conversation with the Headquarters officers, a remark was made by one of them to the effect that if the request for a larger allocation of the native products to the civil population had come simply from the Commission, something might have been done, but with England demanding it—"No, a thousand times No."

This was our cue. We repudiated England! What England demanded was its affair. Let the Germans fight it out with England. What the Commission pleaded for was its own affair—the affair of saving the lives of human beings; of keeping body and soul together for ten million people, known to the world as Belgians and French, but known to the Commission as human beings, men, women, and children, especially children, crying for food!

As we were not allowed to attend the conference we had to work outside. We argued with the Great Headquarters men. We urged on the representatives of General von Bissing's Belgian Government the consequence to the population for whose lives this Government was responsible, and on the representatives of the Foreign Office and Department of the Interior the consequences of the position of Germany before the world if German action should cause the terrible tragedy which the abolishment of the ravitaillement would certainly entail. We argued here and pleaded there. And it all had to be done before that fateful conference of the day's length should dissolve.

The long story must be cut short. We succeeded! The Commission was allowed to continue its work. And even more. Just three weeks later we signed an agreement with the General Staff by which *twice* the proportion of the coming crops of Northern France was reserved for the people as had been reserved of the previous crop. And still later—unfortunately much later, but still better than not at all— a little fresh meat and butter and cheese from Holland began to be eaten by the protein- and fat-hungry people of Northern France.

The conference broke up with the Reventlow gang sullen and angry, but accepting, as all Germans do accept, the will of the higher command. Mr. Hoover returned to England to continue negotiations with London. I went back to Brussels and the Great Headquarters to hasten the formulation and signature of the agreements. The crisis was past.

DOCUMENT NO. 376

Letter, Hoover to Chevrillon, *describing the difficulty of the negotiations with the Germans and the harmful effect on the negotiations of the shipment of supplies into Northern France via Switzerland*

London, 12 August 1916

My Dear Chevrillon:

Harvest Negotiations

I have been in Belgium and Berlin, endeavoring to come to an arrangement with regard to the English demands in this particular.

It has proven an extremely difficult and disagreeable negotiation in every particular, and difficulties and disagreeableness have been materially increased and the whole position jeopardized by the continued action of the French Government in giving permission to ship through Switzerland.[53] The Germans are sufficiently convinced that threats from the English side are of no permanent consequence; that assurances of ours that the ravitaillement cannot be carried on except through us are futile; and, generally, I feel that we can scarcely be blamed if, in the face of the action of the shipping of stuff through Switzerland, we fail altogether.

Mr. Honnold has explained to me the reasons, but it seems to me hardly fair to us, in the midst of a negotiation of this kind, that we should be placed in the position we have been. The German authorities apparently received constant assurances that the French Government is not in sympathy with the restrictions imposed by the British; that in the end they would not be insisted upon, and they have evidence of this by the opening up of new channels through Switzerland.

I do not think that anyone could be more solicitous for the welfare of human beings than our group have been for the welfare of the people of Northern France and, despite all that may be said by committees, and all the theoretical reports that may be written by professors, the population is alive today and in good health. It is true that we would like to have a larger supply of food, more money, and more ships, and that thereby life should become much more endurable to these people under most difficult circumstances, but it does not appear to me to be fair to us to ask us to continue in this work without our being considered the absolute pivot on which the whole ravitaillement hangs, and that no other channel should be opened to the North of France in any shape or form without our previous approval. We have no desire for a monopoly. We have encouraged in every manner every stream of foodstuff into Northern France, but unless we can control these streams, it seems absolutely hopeless to expect us to protect the people from the military authorities. Therefore, I think we must insist that we shall not continue this work, unless prior to any arrangement whatever as to the French Government's approval to the introduction of foodstuffs into Northern France, such proposal shall have received our confirmation. I shall be much surprised if the action with regard to Switzerland does not cost us 100,000 tons of wheat out of the native products.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

[53] See Document 295, chapter vi.

DOCUMENT NO. 377

Memorandum of a conference and agreement, between Major von Kessler and Kellogg *of the C.R.B., regarding reservations of food in Northern France and the Belgian Etapes and increase in rations to the civil population*

Brussels, 26 August 1916

Major von Kessler declared it to be the intention of the German authorities to increase, from October 1st, 1916, the ration of flour and potatoes of the civil population of the North of France and the Belgian Etappen to 200 grams of flour and 400 grams of potatoes per person per day, this being an increase over the flour ration at present provided of 100 per cent, and over the potato ration of 100 per cent.

Major von Kessler further declared it to be the intention of the German authorities to continue to reserve to the civil population the garden fruit and vegetables and to make certain other reservations to the civil population of poultry, eggs, pigs, rabbits, etc., as will help to ensure a supply of fresh meat to the people.

Director Kellogg declared it to be the intention of the Commission for Relief in Belgium to continue the ravitaillement of the North of France and the Belgian Etappen along the lines of the present ravitaillement but with certain changes in the amounts of flour and other foodstuffs in order to make the whole ration, German and C.R.B. combined, the most advantageous one from the point of view of the nutrition of the people.

The increase in the German ration of flour, for example, would allow the C.R.B. flour ration to be somewhat reduced, and the money and tonnage thereby saved devoted to the increase in the amounts of certain other foodstuffs provided, as bacon and lard, dried peas and beans, etc., and especially to the obtaining and providing, if possible, of fresh or preserved meats.

Director Kellogg also declared it to be the intention of the C.R.B. to endeavor to obtain an increase in its funds devoted to the ravitaillement of the North of France in order to meet the additional needs of the people for the coming winter.

These declarations are hereby accepted as the basis of an agreement between the German General Staff of the Great Headquarters and the Commission for Relief in Belgium as to the conditions of the further ravitaillement of the civil population of the North of France and the Belgian Etappen, that is, from October 1st, 1916, until later agreement.

(Signed) von Kessler
(Signed) V. L. Kellogg

DOCUMENT NO. 378

Letter, HOOVER TO PERCY, *describing the increase over the preceding year of local produce available for civilian population as result of the new agreement with the German military authorities*

LONDON, 4 September 1916

DEAR LORD EUSTACE:

Please find enclosed herewith a note from Dr. Kellogg from Rotterdam, on the subject of the new German agreement with regard to Northern France and the Etapes [Belgian].

I am pleased to tell you that the agreement applies to the whole of the Etapes as well as to Northern France and this represents a substantial improvement over the position to which I was afraid we might have to retreat.

As the agreement now stands, it represents at our estimate of the population, a total amount of wheat for Northern France of 192,000 tons, or an increase over last year of 96,000. Assuming that the harvest is somewhere about 450,000 tons, this represents about 43 per cent of the total harvest, as against our estimate of 30 per cent raised actually by the hands of the peasants.

With regard to the Etapes, it represents on our estimate of the population a total of 148,000 tons and an increase over last year of 74,000 tons, amounting on our estimates to fully two and a half times the native harvest. In other words, something more of the French crop has been obtained for distribution in the Etapes. Altogether, if we estimate the Etapes harvest at about 60,000 and the total in the Etapes and Northern France at 510,000 these arrangements represent roughly 66 per cent of the entire harvest and, as nearly as our estimates go, to about 170 per cent of the cereals actually raised by the hands of the peasants. In total, the population should receive from this source for Northern France and the Etapes approximately 340,000 tons of cereals during the next twelve months, or an increase of 160,000 tons. At present prices the total represents a value of over £6,800,000 of value.

In the matter of potatoes, the arrangements seem to me to be very satisfactory, as the Etapes are amalgamated with Northern France in this particular and it should cover practically all the potatoes which they will be able to extract from the peasants.

I shall probably not have the actual contract in hand for another week.

Altogether, I think that we can congratulate ourselves on so satisfactory a consummation.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 379

Letter, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *with regard to the new agreement with the Germans and the manner in which it is to be made public*

LONDON, 4 September 1916

MY DEAR CHEVRILLON:

I enclose herewith copy of a telegram which came through from Brussels, together with a note from Dr. Kellogg, from Rotterdam, setting out in general, the terms of the agreement between the Commission for Relief in Belgium and the German Staff à propos of Northern France. This agreement also covers the Etappengebiet in Belgium. I shall be able to send you the text of the original agreement in the course of the next week or two.

One important condition of this arrangement is, you will notice, that there shall be no attempt to put it over the Germans by the Allied Governments in this matter. The British Government is willing enough to suppress any exultation and I hope you will explain the seriousness of the matter from our point of view to Mr. Marjorie. It is certain enough that the agreement is the result of pressure and it is undesirable at this stage to rub it in.

Two hundred grams of flour is equal to 242 grams of wheat per diem, and upon the 2,200,000 people in Northern France and the 1,700,000 in the Etappengebiet means 340,000 tons of wheat from the Germans during the next twelve months. The crop of cereals in the Etape last year was not over 70,000 tons, and according to the Germans the crop in Northern France does not exceed 450,000 tons; so that, if this is true, we have certainly obtained a great deal more than the harvest raised actually at the hands of the peasant population. In any event, this wheat has a value of over £6,800,000 at present prices, so that I think we may take a great deal of satisfaction out of the agreement.

In order to give a ration of 400 grams of bread to the people in Northern France and the Etape, it means that we shall have to import approximately 8,000 tons for the North of France and 6,100 tons for the Etape. The harvest of potatoes in Northern France is certainly not equal to 400 grams per diem, and by making the agreement over the whole area including the Etape the probabilities are that the native production about covers the whole 400 grams and gives us reasonable security for its delivery during the year. I am anxious to hear from you as to the confirmation of the French Government of the memorandum which was submitted to them and also the memorandum with regard to accounting.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

DOCUMENT NO. 380

Letter, HOOVER TO VON KESSLER, *confirming the Allied acceptance of the agreement between the C.R.B. and German General Headquarters*

BRUSSELS, 19 September 1916

DEAR MAJOR VON KESSLER:

I am glad to confirm to you, as I have already stated verbally to Count Wengersky, that the Allied Governments have agreed with the Commission for Relief in Belgium to accept the arrangement settled between yourself and Doctor Kellogg on August 26th, and they have facilitated our securing a considerable increase of resources on the basis of this arrangement. We now have available an increase of between seven and eight million francs per month—in addition to the twenty millions previously; and furthermore have an indeterminate sum at our disposal to pay for fresh meat, cheese, and butter if they can be secured from Holland.

We are also replacing the saving on imported wheat in the Etappen by increasing the other supplies to this section.

I wish to express my personal appreciation of the spirit of cooperation shown by the German authorities with us in so adequately augmenting the much needed supplies to the French people and the Belgians in the Etappen.

With kind regards, I am

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER, *Chairman*

DOCUMENT NO. 381

Extract of letter, HOOVER TO CHEVRILLON, *regarding a promised increase in the French subsidy and its relation to the recent agreement regarding the harvest in the North of France*

LONDON, 28 September 1916

Monsieur L. Chevrillon, Paris

DEAR CHEVRILLON:

We are of course pretty anxious about the French subsidy. I found when arriving in Belgium that the potato crop in the North of France and the Belgian Etapes had proved very much less than the Germans had anticipated and probably will only furnish 60 per cent of the quantity which they have pledged themselves to find. Also the grain crop has not realized on harvest what they anticipated. Altogether the bargain was one which we could not have gotten through if we had been a month later with it. They were therefore very restive under the contract, and Kellogg and all our people were insistent that we must confirm the agreement and give them no time or loophole for escape. I therefore did so in the terms of the letter which I sent you yesterday. You will see that I have just acted on

your suggestion that we could consider the arrangement with the French Government as settled so far as any action on our part was concerned, and I am now very anxious over the situation. Furthermore, we are pledging ourselves to the larger imports and our finances will be in trouble pretty soon.

We secured a thousand sheep in Holland and shipped them into Northern France as a first installment, and the gratitude of the people is beyond description, as this was the first meat any of them had tasted in five months.

We are still negotiating with the Germans with regard to the Dutch foodstuffs, and Kellogg is rather confident that we shall get a permit for the importation of at least 5,000 sheep a month and some other products from Holland.

. . . . . .

Yours faithfully

(Signed) HERBERT HOOVER

7. *The Harvests of 1917 and 1918*

When the time came to take up with the German General Staff the question of the disposition of the harvest of 1917, the American representatives of the Commission had been withdrawn from the occupied territories. In June 1917 at the request of C.R.B. headquarters in London, Mr. Baetens, the Commission's representative in Brussels, the Comité Français, and the new Comité Hispano-Néerlandais raised the question with the military authorities. Count Wengersky did not challenge the general principle established by Hoover's negotiations the previous year. He stated, however, that the Allied offensive in the Somme region in 1916 (the Battle of the Somme) and the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line in February 1917 had greatly reduced the producing area of French territory in German control and that therefore it would be impossible to furnish as large a ration from local produce as in 1916. The ration eventually authorized was 150 grams per capita per day.

DOCUMENT NO. 382

Letter, LONDON TO BRUSSELS OFFICE OF COMMISSION, *suggesting that it is time to begin negotiations with Army Headquarters concerning the disposition of 1917 crop in Northern France and in Flanders*

LONDON, 9 June 1917

We beg to suggest that it is time to begin negotiations with Headquarters at Charleville, concerning the disposition of the French

native crop of 1917. We presume that this matter will be handled by the Comité Neutre pour la Protection du Ravitaillement and that this agreement will read from the General Staff to them.

You have in your files, we believe, a copy of the agreement entered into between Dr. Kellogg and Major von Kessler in 1916 and we suggest that this be followed as nearly as possible. Please keep us advised of the progress of these negotiations.

DOCUMENT NO. 383

Letter, Poland to Baetens, *representative of the Commission in Brussels, pointing out the importance of securing the necessary undertakings from the Germans for the 1917 crop in the Occupation Zone in Belgium*

London, 3 July 1917

My Dear Mr. Baetens:

. . . . we know that everyone in Belgium has been working hard on the matter of the new agreements for the following harvest concerning the issue to the civil population of wheat and potatoes in Northern France and the Etapes.

While I am sure it is quite unnecessary to urge upon you the importance of having this question settled right away, we must tell you that there are certain political considerations here which make it gravely necessary that we have an undertaking from the Germans, along essentially the lines of last year, covering these distributions, and I beg that you will present this view to the Patron Ministers and do everything possible to get the information to us at the earliest date.

Yours faithfully

(Signed) W. B. Poland
Director for Europe

DOCUMENT NO. 384

Letter, German General Government in Belgium to Comité Hispano-Néerlandais, *stating that the General Staff had agreed to reserve the total crop of the Army Zones for the civil population and to supply a ration of 150 grams per capita per day*

Brussels, 30 July 1917

To the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais, Brussels

I have the honor to advise the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais that, according to telegraphic communication from Count Wengersky, the total crop of bread grains, rye and wheat, in the occupied territories of Northern France and the Flanders Etape will be reserved to the civil population.

As the crop will be less important than that of last year it will

be necessary to bring the flour ration down to 150 grams per day beginning September 1st.

Concerning the potato crop, nothing definite can yet be stated. Count Wengersky hopes, however, to be able to fix the ration at 200 grams per head per day.

(Signed) RIETH

[*Translation*]

In August 1918 representatives of the relief organizations began discussions with the representatives of the German General Staff relative to the disposition of the harvest of this year in the Army Zones. Because of the decline in the production of the soil and for other causes Count Wengersky declared that a further reduction in the daily ration to 75 grams would be necessary. This program, officially confirmed on the 13th September, was never carried out, for the military events of the next few weeks ended German control in both Northern France and Belgium. As has been shown in chapter iii, the Commission had prepared for the new situation and was able, therefore, with the termination of hostilities to increase its imports to the amount necessary to carry the people of the recovered regions through the winter and spring and until the Belgian and French authorities were in a position to take over the responsibilities discharged by the Commission during the years of enemy occupation.

DOCUMENT NO. 385

Letter, WENGERSKY TO LANGENBERGH,[54] *relative to the prospects of the harvest of 1918 and the measures adopted to increase the food supply in the Army Zones*

CHARLEVILLE, 2 September 1918

DEAR MR. LANGENBERGH:

In regard to our various oral discussions and your letter of August 8th I would like to communicate to you below some data concerning the disposition of the crop of the previous year and the prospects for the coming agricultural year.

The harvest of the year 1916–17 afforded a yield of about 140,000 tons of bread grains. Of this the amount of about 12,000 tons has been reserved for seed for new cultivation for the year 1917–18. It appears therefore that 128,000 tons of bread grains, or 97 per cent

[54] Dutch representative in Brussels of the Comité Hispano-Néerlandais. See chapter xii.

milling, 124,000 tons of flour, were available. We distributed to the inhabitants 132,800 tons of flour so that, in order to attain this figure, 8,800 tons of flour of German production were added to the crop harvested here.

With the yield you must take into account that with the complete lack of artificial fertilizer in the occupied territory and the proportionately slight possibilities of having natural fertilizer the fertility of the arable ground is naturally declining greatly. We are therefore following the policy, so far as is possible, of tilling only the fields capable still of producing, so that no unnecessary waste of seed is entailed; hence the result also that the arable areas are constantly diminishing. In the harvest year of 1917–18 there occurred consequently again a decrease in the arable areas of 55,000 hectares, and the crop will be proportionately smaller; exact figures for the harvest 1917–18 are naturally not yet available; I have, however, endeavored to obtain from the agricultural experts as exact a figure for the yield as possible and can say that the crop will not exceed a yield of 110,000 tons. We must reserve from this amount at least 10,000 tons as seed for the coming agricultural year; if we, therefore, in the coming year reckon an average per capita per day of 75 grams of flour, the German Government will again be obliged most probably to contribute about 5,000 tons of flour from German stocks as additional supply for the civil population. You see, therefore, my dear M. Langenbergh, that an increase in the supplementary flour portions cannot be considered. According to information from the Commissary General there can be no estimate as yet whether it will be possible in the first months, perhaps, to allow an increase in the flour portion to 100 grams; if this should perhaps prove possible I would wish most particularly to emphasize that in the later months a reduction to less than 75 grams would have to be made, since, as mentioned, even the portion of 75 grams involves a contribution from German resources.

As regards the supplying of the population with vegetables, the tilling of the land by the commissaries of which I informed you, has for the past two or three years been carried out to the full extent in the districts of Charleville, Vervins, partially in the district of Hautmont. This cultivation consists in ceding to every inhabitant of the rural districts two ares of land [approximately one-twentieth of an acre] for cultivation; the fields are tilled by the inhabitants, they are provided with signboards and absolutely protected from every kind of requisition. The commissaries see to it that these regulations, which are recognized by all military authorities, are observed. The products of these fields are unreservedly at the disposal of the inhabitants. Thus there has been attained for the inhabitants, in those districts which have already carried out these measures, very abundant provision of vegetables, potatoes, turnips, cabbages, et cetera. Unfortunately, two or three years ago, when I made this proposal some of the districts could not bring themselves to introduce this system of agriculture and as a result the vegetable supply in the northern districts has up till now been less plentiful than I could have wished.

I have now succeeded in bringing all districts to the point of desiring to apply this system; however, inasmuch as in previous years work along these lines had not been done, the necessary seed, especially for potatoes, et cetera, is not at the disposal of the districts which are only just beginning the arrangement now, whereas in the case of Charleville, Vervins, and Hautmont (in the two former in abundance, and in the latter sufficiently also) it could, with ease, be reserved from their previous harvests.

I mention also that in the case of the larger cities where the inhabitants individually cannot thus take an active part in farming, the arrangement has been made by which the rural communities take over the cultivation of the land for them.

In your communication concerning the provision of varieties of seed an error has slipped in, in so far as you write that we have collected seeds to the value of 12 million [francs]; this is of course not correct; the procuring of seeds by us largely from Germany amounted to 1½ million marks; we had as our object also the providing of the population as far as possible with seeds for the growing of cabbages and to give these principally to that portion of the districts where the planting of potatoes was not possible. There exists, therefore, the prospect that in this year the population will be provided most abundantly with vegetables. It will naturally be my endeavor to try to obtain for those sections, where the yield of the native fields is not especially good, that potatoes or turnips, from the army stocks, be placed at their disposal.

As soon as the prices for the supplying of the population with grain or flour are stable I will at once communicate them to you so that you may be fully informed on the subject.

I hope that you will perceive from the above that on the part of the German army administration in so far as concerns the commissaries, everything will be done to supply as much as possible to the population.

With the expression of my highest esteem,

Yours very truly

(Signed) COUNT WENGERSKY

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 386

Minutes of a meeting of representatives of the German General Staff and the relief organizations relative to the harvest of 1918 and the ration of 1918–19

BRUSSELS, 10 September 1918

Present: Count Wengersky, Captain Schroeder, Messrs. Langenbergh, Baetens, and Van Brée.

The session was opened at 11:00 o'clock.

HARVEST 1918–1919

Regarding the arrangements for the handling of the next harvest in the Etapes and in the territory of Northern France, Count

Wengersky confirms the information he gave to Mr. Langenbergh in his letter of September 2 of the current year. He is now able to state that the necessary arrangements have been made so that during the month of October 100 grams of domestic flour per person may be distributed; it is hoped that the same will be true for November. However, since the average ration for the entire year is calculated to be 75 grams daily, it will be necessary in the future to reduce this ration in order to keep the general average of 75 grams. He adds that it is absolutely impossible to do more than that.

As for the question of domestic vegetables, aside from the arrangements which have been made in various army groups by the officers in charge of revictualing to insure supplies to the population by means of native products, he hopes to be able to import for the combined Agglomerations of Lille, Roubaiz, Tourcoing, and Valenciennes, potatoes to be sent from Germany by way of Nuremonde. Count Wengersky is not yet in a position to state that his measures will succeed.

It has been called to the attention of Count Wengersky that these conditions are quite unfavorable and that it is regrettable that they are less satisfactory than those of last year.

As a matter of fact during 1917–1918 the average daily allotment of domestic flour reached 94.3 grams per person, whereas the average for the next allotment will fall to 75 grams. Besides, last year a minimum of 200 grams of potatoes had been promised whereas this year no promise of this sort has been made.

Count Wengersky points out that a diminution in the production of cereals is inevitable. His letter to Mr. Langenbergh gives the reasons for this.

The arrangements made in regard to the question of potatoes, Count Wengersky points out, are more satisfactory than those of last year. In effect last year rather inconsiderable quantities were actually furnished except in Flanders where the full ration and even far more was distributed. Under the present arrangement the French districts will be better provided for than they were last year. In fact the districts which are under cultivation, as Charleville, St. Quentin, and Vervins, will receive large quantities of potatoes. Likewise in Flanders the ration will exceed 200 grams daily per person. As for Lille and Valenciennes he hopes by means of potatoes from Germany to furnish large supplies to these places.

Count Wengersky has been asked to have the domestic cereals actually used on the ground and not to have German flour substituted for them.

Count Wengersky says that it is impossible to give a formal guarantee in regard to this matter. Indeed the needs of the troops necessitate at times the utilizing of supplies that are on hand, the latter to be replaced by flour coming from Germany. Nevertheless, he is able to give assurances in so far as the regions of Flanders, Lille, and Valenciennes, and a part of Haumont are concerned that the greater part of domestic flour consumed there will come from the domestic harvest.

Count Wengersky has been asked to please send an official letter to the Spanish-Dutch Committee concerning the question of the domestic harvests and to send a similar communication through the V.C.N. to the Comité National, especially regarding the region of Flanders.

And so it is understood that for the month of October, as probably also for the month of November, 100 grams of domestic flour will be delivered. The general ration of flour can thus be increased by 25 grams.

For his part Mr. Langenbergh will ask the C.R.B. to please allow a supply of 175 grams instead of 150 grams of imported flour so as to be able to keep the general ration at 250 grams. The supplement of domestic flour given out during October and November will be lessened upon the materializing of the crops of the second semester, that is, beginning April 1919. Under these conditions there will be furnished to the inhabitants of Northern France and the territory of the Belgian Etapes, during the month of September, a daily ration of 75 grams of domestic flour; during the months of October and, if possible, November, 100 grams; during the months of December, January, and February, 75 grams; and the following six months, about 65 grams.

The Executive Committee of the C.F.

Count Wengersky has been asked what result the letter addressed him by Mr. Langenbergh regarding the meeting of the members of the Executive Committee of the C.F. may have had.

Count Wengersky replies that he is actually in negotiation with headquarters to have the measures confirmed by the Spanish-Dutch Committee and hopes to be able to accomplish it. In the meantime he will arrange to have the passport of Mr. Blondet delivered at the same time as a passport to the delegate from Valenciennes so that these delegates may be able to discuss together the question of revictualing their districts which are contiguous.

Concerning Mr. Labbé the question of his passport is about to be arranged. It will, however, be impossible to obtain a passport for Mrs. Labbé. Mr. Labbé's passport will permit him to live in Brussels for a certain time without, however, allowing him regular weekly trips between Lille and Brussels.

Manufacture of Crackers

Count Wengersky points out that he has undertaken a series of measures in Brussels with the idea of obtaining the resumption of the manufacture of crackers. Although the opposition on the part of the President of the Central Bureau of Harvests may be very strong he hopes to arrive at a solution which will in part be satisfactory to the Committee and which will permit him to make a certain type of "couque scolaire," which is like a cracker.

Salt

Count Wengersky points out that he has received very numerous requests to increase the shipments of salt to the territory of Northern

France and the Etapes. As he learned on the other hand that the consumption of salt was no longer regulated or limited in Germany he is taking measures with the Reichskommissar to find out if actually the supply of salt in Northern France and the Etapes is still limited to 2,000 tons monthly as was decided at the end of 1917.

Douai

Count Wengersky has been asked if it is not possible to take special measures to try to save a part of the stock of the C.R.B. which is in the storehouses of Douai. Count Wengersky says that Rittmeister Neuerbourg is busy with this question and will do his utmost to try to save as much of the merchandise as possible, but he fears, nevertheless, that a large part of the products will be definitely lost.

The session was closed at 12:15.

[*Translation*]

DOCUMENT NO. 387

Telegram, WENGERSKY TO LANGENBERGH, *stating that the daily ration from local bread grains would be about 75 grams during 1918–19*

BRUSSELS, 13 September 1918

To the Spanish-Dutch Committee:

As last year, the total production of the harvest in cereals, rye and wheat, will be reserved for the population this year; after the deduction of the seed necessary for next year, that will permit the distribution of an individual daily ration of about 75 grams of flour.

For the revictualing in potatoes or vegetables, there has been placed at the disposal of all the inhabitants of Northern France a field of 200 square meters which is under the surveillance of the Verpflegungsoffizier (commissary), the output of which is at the disposition of the civil population, free from all requisition. I have secured the necessary seed in a sufficient quantity.

Besides, I am endeavoring to import potatoes from Germany into the northern districts where, in consequence of the lack of seed potatoes, the crop according to the prediction, will be mediocre.

(Signed) WENGERSKY

[*Translation*]

8. *Local and Imported Bread Grains. 1914–1918*

Apart from the wider issues involved in the protection of local crops, the various agreements and administrative arrangements covered by the preceding documents resulted in saving for the people of the Occupation and Army Zones

considerable quantities of food that otherwise would have been lost to them through requisitioning or uncontrolled trading. There is no way of knowing the quantities of potatoes and other local vegetables that were distributed, but it is possible to estimate the bread grains locally produced and rationed. The following table shows the quantities available in the Occupation and Army Zones, respectively, and the amount imported by the C.R.B. in the corresponding years.

CONSUMPTION OF BREAD GRAINS BELGIUM AND NORTHERN FRANCE, 1914–18

(Metric tons)

Year	Locally Produced			C.R.B. Importations‡
	Occupation Zone*	Army Zones†	Total	
1914–15¶	.....	.....	.....	761,481
1915–16	203,366	130,000	333,366	1,021,429
1916–17	162,503	140,000	302,503	540,786
1917–18	164,774	110,000	274,774	725,840
Total	530,643	380,000	910,643	3,049,536§

* Figures from A. Henry: *La Ravitaillement de la Belgique*, p. 78.

† Based on the ration and production figures of Count Wengersky of the German General Staff. Wengersky declared that in order to maintain the agreed contribution during 1916–17 considerable German flour had to be used. See Document 385.

‡ Includes imported flour as well as wheat, rye, barley, and maize. Gay: *Statistics*, pp. 192–199.

¶ The 1914 crop partially destroyed and largely requisitioned by the German armies.

§ In addition, the C.R.B. imported 675,513 tons of bread grains during the months following the Armistice.

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